

**Leonardo Ricci** one of Europe's great younger architects, presents a moving testament of faith in the future of mankind. **ANONYMOUS (20th CENTURY)** signals and salutes the new class of men who will one day arise, uniting technological power to the humanitarian spirit. They will create a sort of anonymous millennium, an egalitarian society only of peers in which both psychological and economic strife are absent and the fruits of earth and of the soul blossom for all. . . . Ricci's book is a journey in the imagination, a book, as the author says, without end and without conclusion, an apolitical vision designed to inspire the reader. It's an exhortation more than welcome in this anxious age.—Virginia Kirkus

## anonymous (20th Century)





LEONARDO RICCI is an architect, an artist, a teacher, but above all a visionary profoundly concerned with the state of twentieth-century man in what he considers to be a time of transition between an old civilization and a new civilization struggling to be born. He lives in Florence, Italy, but he has also lived in Paris and in the United States, where he was visiting lecturer on architecture at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

To the reader, Ricci will seem to be either an idealist or a realist of the most precise dimensions, depending on one's own view of the meaning of his existence. Certainly few men have been able to write as eloquently of their world in relation to themselves and their work, or of themselves in relation to the world. Ricci is a man of passionate convictions, but his convictions never descend to the level of argument; they are the living stuff of his being.

He sees architecture as a creative act, and the obligation of the architect "to make the actions of man come alive." The architect, the artist, is responsible to society, he says, and ultimately his work will be judged by the degree to which it satisfies the needs of that society. Not the needs of profit or exploitation, but the inner needs of people living in the middle of the twentieth century, with all the wealth of technology at hand to build a freer and more meaningful life for themselves.

"I may build an ugly house," he writes, "in which people live miserably like rats, but the police cannot get after me and lock me up. This means that I may steal the possibility of exist-

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Anonymous (20th century)



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**ANONYMOUS (20th CENTURY)**



*Leonardo Ricci*

ANONYMOUS  
(20th CENTURY)

*GEORGE BRAZILLER*

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# Introduction

What can a man do who is not a poet, not a writer, not even a literary man, but who feels he must, almost in spite of himself, express himself in words, because his own means of expression—those of an architect, of a painter—are insufficient for him at this particular moment of history?

I think he must write. There is no other way out.

If I were a poet, all would be well. I should know how to write. Then I should be able to take words into my hands, put them on a stone, and hammer brain, heart, blood, and lungs out of them.

But to be a writer today! At a time when even words are used up and have lost their living meaning!

A man says the word "sky." He says "earth," "rock." But, honestly, if someone says "sky," do you have the sky in the back of your mind, the way it was when it appeared the first time in this world? And when someone says "earth," do you hold tight in your arms all the earth under the vaulted sky? And when someone says "rock," can you see all the rocks in the world, different in color and form, burning under the sun, cold at night?

After all, I am uttering simple words, words that signify things we see all the time, things we touch, everyday things.

Imagine if I said for example: "love." Or "sweetness." Or, even worse, metaphysical terms like "charity," or "justice." Oh no, no! Nothing doing. Even if I were a poet or a philosopher, I should find it difficult to write at this time.

Just think of it: to make brain, heart, blood, lungs emerge from words!

A poet does not need an introduction. He steps directly into his story. He does not need a justification. But I do. I must try to be honest. Therefore, before starting my book I must write an introduction.

On one side of the page are you, on the other side am I.

When I say "you," I mean: you Negro, you Chinese, you Englishman, you American. When I say "you," I also mean: you woman, you man. And also: you sick man, you rich man, you poor man; you sophisticated being, you rustic. For in reality, you are all the "others."

But on the other side am I. I who? I should like to answer: I, Anonymous (20th Century). But I am going to sign this book with my name. And that which in good conscience should have been the signature, is going to be the title of this book.

That is the way it has to be. Because, in truth, I am not yet in a position to be Anonymous (20th Century). And thus it is right that I sign my name. If this book is going to be silly, it's I who am silly, and whatever does not make any sense in this book will be there because I don't make sense. But what is going to be beautiful and right and useful and important, and, above all, true, will have been written by Anonymous (20th Century).

It's really a beautiful title. I'm crazy about it. But what does it mean? It means that, at this particular moment of history, man is in a fix. In a bad fix. And if he goes on this way, he is going to get clobbered. The only way out of this blind alley is to become "Anonymous (20th Century)."

I did not say *the* anonymous twentieth-century man. I said "Anonymous (20th Century)." There is a shade of difference between the two. But quite a shade. My whole effort in this book will be to try to explain who this strange type is.

And so this book is about the crisis through which we are going today, and it tries to indicate a possible way out. I don't mean to be disparaging when I say "crisis." This book deals with a moment in man's history in which he is trying to pass from one type of civilization to another. I find myself stuck in this particular historical moment. Whether I like it or not, I can neither run for cover in the artificial paradises of the past, nor pro-



ject my hopes into the false promises of the future. Whether I like it or not, this situation in which I find myself is as clear to me as daylight.

In their attempts to survive, self-styled modern men have found a thousand justifications or non-justifications. None of them is acceptable to me. Thus I have set out to find my own justification, my own *raison d'être*. It is somewhere along the existentialist line; but from existentialist it has become plain existential. To put it succinctly: I am happy to be alive, and I know why. Even more than that: I know that this, my being happy and knowing why, is in no way a personal circumstance. On the contrary, it is something that is in the air, and many people find themselves in the same situation or are about to enter it. Since the ideas are clear, I feel it my duty to try to define and express them, and since my profession is that of architect and painter, in expressing them I shall naturally emphasize this particular aspect of human life.

These days I hardly ever get through a book. This is partly my fault (if that is the right word) and it is partly because the contents of these books do not give me any satisfaction. It is also partly because the "form" does not interest me; it affords me neither pleasure nor satisfaction. In general, books today belong to one of two types.

They are either conceived as style; or, in their endeavor to break with style, they are enslaved by it.

This same phenomenon exists in the field of architecture. In architecture I try to conceive a work neither in terms of style nor as a slave to style. What I try to do is to make its form correspond to an act of existence, or, to put it more precisely, to acts of existence—a series of acts.

The beauty or ugliness of life basically depends on the gracefulness or the lack of grace with which such acts are performed. What is true for a piece of architecture must be no less true for a book. Thus I am very much concerned about the form of this book, even though I am not a professional writer. Because I am

concerned about the problem of how this act or this series of acts of my existence translates into form.

Therefore I shall try to make sure that my book reflects this attitude. And since my acts are at times performed with gracefulness, but at other times lack grace, I want the form of my book to reflect both types of action. In other words, in some parts the book will have a form; in other parts this form will be lacking.

I want it to be an "open" book. In the final chapter I shall explain what I mean by that. Open to everything and to all. And even able to be continued indefinitely by other people, in other walks of life. Just as life itself is continuous.

I am going to drive into a totally unknown world; it's just like driving into certain parts of the United States where everything is in a process of evolution. You start off. At times you find magnificent superhighways, but somehow you don't know where they're taking you; when you are fed up with the superhighway, you take a secondary road, and the landscape is a bore, but suddenly you discover a magnificent lake. You get going again, and you find yourself among the trees of a formless forest. The forest ends, the desert begins. There is a fantastic rock in the middle of it. Then, when you least expect it, you find yourself on the superhighway again. All this is dangerous; and it is a typically American danger: its vitality is such that you don't really know where it is going to take you. A road that may end in sand, and another that may end in the discovery of a splendid new world; the two are marked at the crossroads with identical signs: standard!

You have to take your chance. This is what I have done. But I think I have made the right choice. I think I have honestly got into the stream of history; and with all my senses I am already aware of the land I am seeking. The land all of us are seeking.

**ANONYMOUS (20th CENTURY)**



## A Choice in the Confusion

Every year, when the students assemble for the first time in my classroom in Florence, there is an atmosphere of embarrassment. These unknowns arrive, sit on their benches, and wait for me. I enter the classroom, look at them, sit down in my chair, and say, "Good morning." They answer, "Good morning," and wait in silence. They wait for the beginning of the lecture.

It's a difficult moment. They are young, wide open, many of them are avid to learn. I am there, paid by the state to teach. I have to teach them to design a building.

If architecture were an exact science like mathematics— $2 + 2 = 4$ —it really would be simple. Today I should teach  $2 + 2 = 4$ ; tomorrow,  $3 \times 3 = 9$ . For that matter, if I say it would be simple, I say it rather offhandedly. But I am paid to teach them architecture, that is, how to construct buildings out of different materials, to create spaces in which people must live.

Think what a responsibility! In the everyday world, if I steal a thousand lire from no matter whom, the cops can get after me and lock me up. For a thousand lire. But as an architect, I can build an ugly house, in which people live miserably like rats, yet the police cannot arrest me. This means that I may steal the possibility of existing without being condemned. At least on this earth. Perhaps God or a delegate of His will do it afterwards. But for the time being, a child born in this house is going to be deprived of vital experiences: he will not see grass or butterflies, not even the sun and the moon, and I'll get away with it. What a shame!

I may produce a round form or a square one, buried underground or raised ten yards above ground, red or blue, and if my clients accept it, everything is all right.

The act may be completely arbitrary.

And they, the students, are there in front of me and wait for the "word." There they are, and each one is different. I look at their faces: all different. I think of their backgrounds: different. Some of them are Catholics; at least, they believe in God. Others don't. Politically, some of them are Communists; others, Socialists, Christian-Democrats, Liberals, Fascists. And I have to teach them architecture.

As if architecture were something abstract, outside our biology, outside our feelings, outside our *Weltanschauung*, outside our social and political position.

This is all pretty funny. Just think of it. If I lived in a well-defined historical period, among people who have shaped a well-defined civilization, who believe more or less in the same things, or whose lives have a minimum common denominator, the problem would probably still be difficult, but not insoluble.

But today, in a period of transition, at a moment when values are so divergent, in this eclectic and experimental period, what can I do?

If I could just pick a group by selection, perhaps things would be a little easier. I could talk only to those who are closer to me, who have confidence in me, who, I see, are searching for the same path, who have embarked on the same adventure!

But I am paid by the state. I have to talk to *all* of them. And if I am not able to, I am a pig.

It is about in this mood that I begin my first lecture on architecture.

I tell them:

Listen, young people. The moment has come for us to make a choice: a choice in the confusion. This choice must not be casual, like choosing 5 or 20 at the roulette

table, but it must be a choice that is intelligent, humane, and, if possible, genuine.

You are going to be architects. But to be an architect does not mean to design one form rather than another. This attitude is inadmissible today. Form is a consequence of the potential vitality intrinsic in an object. But we shall come back to this later. To construct a building means to make people live in one way rather than in another. What criteria will you follow?

I see that they look at me with surprise. They don't answer. Therefore I go on.

If I may classify matters for a moment, my dear young people (I say "for a moment" because to classify means to make a mistake in any case), I think that in this world there are three possible ways of living. There are people who can think of the world only in terms of myth. Others believe the world is absurd. Very few believe it is logical (not in the sense of "rational" but in the sense of "*logos*"). None of you can get away from this choice. But I cannot take you by your coat tails and force you to choose one or the other of these ways. It's up to you. All I can honestly do is to tell you that I have chosen the third way. As we go along I shall gradually explain to you my reasons.

But let us take it gradually.

Here among you, then, are people who believe in myths. Most people do; indeed, almost everybody. It does not matter, for the moment, what kind of myth: whether religious, philosophical, political, or social. It is possible that among you university students the percentage of myth-minded persons is somewhat lower than among other groups. But not much. For the myth is a strange animal, a sort of Arabian phoenix. It dies only to be reborn from its ashes. Thus it often happens that, freed at last, you lift your eyes for a moment toward the freed sky, take a deep breath, and your lungs are, as it were, in harmony with the surrounding atmosphere. After a little while you sit down on the ground, happy to get some rest from your joy. Now look there: you sat down, again, on a myth.

But I said that I have chosen the third possibility. This does not mean that to my mind those who still live in the myth are necessarily crooks or fools, hopelessly middle-class or at any rate out of fashion. Not at all.

Just look: at everything that exists on earth. Everything. There is some rather good stuff, isn't there? It belongs to the myth. The myth, then, has created some pretty respectable things. I myself have learned gradually to live through the myth. It is tradition. Even today, I look at everything, I study, I compare all that man has achieved before my time. In a spirit of humility. I still can learn from the myth. The only difference is in the way of appraising, of judging it. But if you are still in the myth, you must know, too, that your own work can have only a symbolic value.

Then there is the second possibility. To consider the world absurd. There are a good many people, mostly of the first category, the myth-minded, who simply laugh in the face of those who believe in the absurd, of those who live in the absurd. God knows why. Perhaps because, for them, belief in the absurd means to be modern, fashionable, to go around in a sweater instead of shirt, tie, and coat, with hair uncut and uncombed instead of well groomed and cared for. But that is not the point. It is true, there are people who fool around with the absurd in order to feel Big, to stage a show, to play a role in life. But even more numerous are those who fool around with the myth—maybe Sunday mornings in Church.

No, gentlemen, to live in the absurd, or, if you wish, at the zero point, or on shifting sands, if you want to call it that, is really no fun at all.

You may fall into the absurd gradually or all of a sudden. It does not depend on your will. It is life that throws you in. This is the way it happens. One morning you find yourself floored. All your muscles ache as if you had had a beating. Your head is empty as in a bad hang-over. You look around. You see grass. You see rocks. You see the sun. The same grass as always, the same rocks, the same sun.



You look around again and say: "It's all absurd." It is no fun, I can tell you, no fun at all.

Before you there are only two ways out: suicide or escape. It does not matter how you got there. You may have gotten there because your son has died, crushed under a tram; because the woman you love has betrayed you. Or through a cold and clear analysis of life. You may have gotten there, too, the way I got there: because I had been too happy and too lucky as compared with others. I, happy? And why?

And thus you fall into the absurd.

If you don't commit suicide, there are many ways of living on. You may become a moralist, which is basically what has happened to a great existentialist writer of today. But whether you become moralists or not, you who want to become architects must know that, if the world is absurd, all the thousand ways of surviving converge on one precise point: narcosis. The person who finds himself in this situation has only one alternative, that is, to create artificial paradises.

To give pleasure. To drive pain away, as much as possible. To hunt it down as one hunts down a ferocious beast which has stolen the only things that mattered to you. To hunt it down the mountains; to drive it from the woods; to chase it across the plains and along the river banks; to drive it into the sea and drown it there. Better still, if the sea is calm and the horizon clearcut and the sun has just gone down and everything is splendid. Drown it there, in the apparent peace of the sea.

Thus, my dear young people, you must learn that, if you are in this state, your architecture, your objects, must create artificial paradises; nothing else. You must know that. Instead of cocaine or morphine, you are going to use architecture.

You may build, this way, an artificial paradise that is more intelligent, more sophisticated, more whatever-you-want; but still, an artificial paradise. And the object and the

form of your object, remember, will be nothing but "dope."

And now, let us examine the last possibility.

This last possibility, as I said before, is to believe that the world is logical. And I want to be most painstakingly clear about this.

Writing lacks gestures. It lacks the eyes of living persons in front of you. Above all, it lacks the presence of others. One grows listless, like kids at school over their Latin test. Instead of watching the page getting filled up with black signs, they look out at the sky. The leaves this morning are hardly stirring. The air is vibrating, and from far away, as though from prehistory, it is carrying the muffled muted sound of an airplane. A sound which seems to become memory. How strange. It seems like the sound of a giant beetle struggling to rise from the ground, in the time when man did not yet exist, was still to evolve from the blood of beasts laboring to assimilate the oxygen from the air.

To struggle. To struggle to rise. To struggle to breathe.

That cute little girl. What a darling little face! Stroke her hair! Give her a smile!

But where the heck is my son who was right here in front of me with his Latin homework because he flunked last June? His books are still open. There is the lexicon. A big fat book full of strange words. White-edged pages, and red-edged pages. The white-edged pages are the Italian-Latin section; the red-edged pages, the Latin-Italian. I pick it up, I open it just anywhere. "*Everbero, -as, -avi, -atum, are*. Transitive, first conjugation: to beat, percuss, hit, whip, strike, batter, beat upon, beat off, reduce to pieces; *everberare mare remis*, to cleave the sea with oars; *everberare cineres plausis alis*, to shake the ashes off one's back by beating the wings."

Sea! Oars! Ashes! Wings! Wings on the sea! To cleave the sea! Oars. I row. I cleave the sea with oars. The sea today is green, after the storm. I curve my back. I swell my chest. The boat cleaves the sea. I look at the young girl in

front of me. She smiles. I am strong. She is sweet. I am shy. I give her a smile. Wouldn't it be wonderful just to take her into my arms. To hold her tight. To feel the sea sun through her skin. To enter into her as into the sea! To feel good. To feel good together. But what a fool I am! All I can do is to take the oar that cleaves the sea and splash some water on her. She had been warm because of the sun. Now she shivers. With goose flesh on her arms. She smiles. But I know she is disappointed. So am I.

That is the way it goes among kids. And even among grown-ups. Oh, the young!

The oar cleaves the sea. The boy is with the girl, in the boat. But enough now. Where is my son? That good-for-nothing! Enough is enough. Come here and study, you mule! Where is his self-respect! In *my* days . . . ! Andrea, Andrea! I call him furiously.

In real reality, it is myself I am calling so furiously. Get down to your studies!

Get down to writing this cursed book which I love so much and which I feel I must write. I, who am not a writer.

"My dear young people." But where are they? I can't see them. And I am so fond of them! I am trying to remember some of them. The best among them. Just to spur myself on. Just to feel useful. But no, this morning I am getting nowhere. The sun is too beautiful. Everything is alive. Everything is amazingly alive. And I too feel alive.

My son is not coming. He is cleverer than I. But I too am fed up.

My son is alive, but he does not know it. I, being older, am alive and know it. But he is shrewder than I. He has quit. And I, instead, am doing my duty.

There is a pack of cards on the table. Come on, one game of solitaire—just one. Maybe two or three. Just to get back into my subject.

Four of hearts. King of diamonds. Life is not absurd. Seven of clubs. Everything has its structure. Ten of spades.

There are rendezvous in the universe. Because there is an earthly economy and a universal economy. And nothing can escape from these rendezvous, as time goes by.

Isn't it beautiful? Rendezvous. Oh, what a lovely language French is. Rendezvous at half past seven at the Café des Deux Magots. Here she comes. I get up. Two Pernods. And then we go. She buys a *baguette*, a dozen oysters. Then we go home to spend the night together. The jack of diamonds after the ten of diamonds. The game of solitaire does not come out, I start all over again. But what has this to do with Anonymous (20th Century)? What has it to do with painting, with architecture, with the serious things of life! You aren't serious. Quiet. Quiet. It has something to do, all right. Perhaps I am not serious. Because I am alive.

There are mountains. And on the mountains there are glaciers. And in the winter so much snow falls on these mountains. But then there is the summer. And during the summer snow and ice melt away. And thus the brooks are born. And the brooks become torrents. Then they calm down and become rivers, and the rivers flow into the sea!

There is the earth. The earth is good and fat and black. Last year, in the summer, my daughter dropped a peach stone. In the spring it germinated. A peach tree was born. In two years it will bear two peaches. One for my daughter who has planted the tree. One for her mother who has brought my daughter into the world.

There is a cylinder. In the cylinder there is a piston. And on top, a spark-plug. And the piston moves. It breathes in the mixture. Then it compresses it. The spark explodes the mixture. Then it expels it. Thus the machine moves by itself.

And there is the Earth. And the Earth is like a great enormous ship suspended in space. And this ship rotates and moves very fast around the sun, carrying with it trees, houses, and human beings. And from this ship we see stupendous panoramas.

And there are men and women. And they make love.

And children are born. The children grow up. And they do so many things. Then they grow old and flow into death.

It all is logical. Even if we don't know why. Mystery is the only possibility of being. Yes, the world is mysterious; but not absurd.

And there is no need of justifications, *a priori*.

God has made all this, so it will be there tomorrow: Hell, Purgatory, and Heaven. Or else all this is born out of chaos, and tomorrow there will be nothing.

But what need is there of all this? Why detach ourselves from experience?

Basically it is all so simple.

It is enough to exist.

It is enough to find the relationships among the things that exist. It is enough to create new relationships among things. It is enough to create living things with living things. You trace a furrow on the ground. You take some stones. With the stones and cement you build a wall. The wall rises and divides space, creating a new space that wasn't there before.

The wind usually comes from here. Here is the southern sun. From here the sea can be seen. And the spaces divided by these walls come ever more alive. Some parts in the shade. Others in the sun. Here it is high. Here low. Here it is nice to rest. Here, to sleep. Here, to work. Thus a house has been born.

I live with a woman. We wake up every morning, and every morning we are reborn. And everything is new. New and without memory. We work, we eat, we live. At night we go to sleep in each other's arms. We look at the night sky. So many stars. And the Milky Way. My wife calls the Big Dipper a buggy. Pulled by two hippogryphs. She really believes it, too. Every night can be different and new if we are alive. Stretch your legs while sleep comes down upon you, and your feet slide under the sheet. Your foot touches hers. You breathe; you sleep; and you are always alive. Tomorrow it will be another sunny day.

But this is not always the way it goes. You wake up heavy. Boredom rules the day. In the evening you fight with your wife. You sleep in the same bed and yet remain strangers, one unknown to the other. Fear grips your heart during the night. And life is a delusion.

There is no excuse. The fault is ours alone; it's we who ruin life. This means that errors must have been committed somewhere, degrading errors which ruin our existence. It would suffice to get rid of these errors, and the world would be new, fresh, and clean.

As I said before, my dear young people, the world is logical. To get to the point of believing that the world is logical is tantamount to saying that we are able to get out of the blind alley.

Have I been clear enough? I look into their faces.

Part I: The World as Myth. Yes. I have been clear. Their faces are tense. Some of them perhaps have their doubts. But even those who, as I can tell from their faces, still live in the myth, have been able to follow me. Later they will ask questions. I'll answer them, one at a time. Routine stuff.

Part II: The World as Absurd. Here too, I have been clear enough. I note that, as I go on, their faces are taking on a different expression. Their eyes are opening wider. Their brows are more wrinkled. They are sprawled on their benches. They take fewer notes. Tension has risen. They are surprised, very much surprised. But I have got hold of them. I feel my hand on their hearts. Like a surgeon. I have their heart muscle in my hands; I feel it pulsating; the pump is working. They are alive. Everything is all right. Also about Part II they will ask questions. There is no doubt, I've hit the mark.

Part III: The World as Logical. As far as I am concerned, this third part is the clearest. The images are most precise. The perception of the objects is right. The structure is free and modern. Space and time insert themselves into the composition in a fluid and living way.

Things have their weight. I have been honest. Not just from this chair, but together with the others, toward all the others. Even though I have but hinted at a few things.

The sea, the oars, my son, the girl, the playing cards, and so on. A world of relationships. Objects which are not isolated one from the other. Dynamic and static balance. Simultaneous immersion and emergence of vision. Measure. Very well. They ought to have understood. I am very well pleased with myself.

I look at their faces. Their expressions are wide open. Some have tears in their eyes. I try to gauge matters correctly. That young lady there. Oh come on: I'd bet my head, she has come to this school of architecture to find a husband. But maybe this is not true at all, and I'd lose my head. It does not matter. Even if she has not come to find a husband (besides, it's her own business), what is sure is that she is sitting there, on that bench. She's got big legs. Her skirt is somewhat tight. She is resting her elbows on the table, with the closed fists at the temples. Something must have happened to her. When she came in, she was pretty, self-composed if not flirtatious. Now her posture is without grace but also without artifice. No more theatricality. She is natural.

I look at that blond boy there. High forehead. Open face. A nice boy. Partly an intellectual, partly "Idiot," in the sense given to this word by Dostoevski. An architect, incidentally, needs to be both. His blue eyes were impenetrable at first. The daytime sky is blue but you can't see the stars. The sea is blue but you can't see the algae or the coral. Now his eyes are defenseless. You can pass through the blue. I can see the stars in his eyes and the algae and the coral, too.

In the meantime, to catch my breath, to restore silence in the air, and to rekindle their interest, I shrewdly walk around the platform, light a cigarette, and look them over.

I realize that the "logical world" has hit the mark. The shock has been violent. But I realize also that a misunderstanding is about to arise. They are still in a state of shock.

But when they walk out of this hall, I am afraid their impressions will be unfortunate. "Damn clever, this professor," one of them will say; and another one, "What poetry!" And the third one will say, "He's wacky."

No my dear young people. Neither clever nor poetic nor wacky. Just trying to be truthful. But the state pays me. The doorman has already showed up to let me know that the lesson is over. It is 12:40. The poor guy has to go home. What shall I do? This is quite a dilemma. If I stop at this point, there is bound to be a misunderstanding. If, instead, I go on lecturing, this poor fellow is going to be late for his lunch, and when he gets home his wife is going to yell at him: "You nitwit, what do you mean, coming home at this hour! If at least they paid you overtime. You're a sucker, that's all."

My own wife has finally got used to this kind of thing.

Scruples? No, I'm no goody-goody. But it's the presence of the others that bothers me. I am a kind of *tricheur*. An inspiration flashes through my head. This doorman used to see me here, in this same school, when I was a boy of eighteen. When I leave the room, I'll pat his back affectionately, and he will smile. I know that this means more to him than the cold soup and the yelling wife. The world is mysterious, but not absurd.

I light another cigarette and go on.

My dear young people. While I was lecturing, I watched you closely. And I saw that I still owed you some explanations. Part I you understood perfectly. You know a myth when you meet one. More or less consciously. The myth has been dominating history for thousands and thousands of years. The observations, the questions that you will address to me afterwards, concern the intensity of the myth. Or perhaps the possibility of distinguishing between reality and myth. Perhaps, if you are more subtle, you will probe the possibility of identifying reality and myth. But, roughly speaking, you all know that an onion is not God, nor a cat, either. Even if in the onion and the cat there is a



coincidence with reality. What's more, by now the myth follows such beaten paths, historically classified even if not clarified, that, just by sniffing your way, you have the development of the myth at your disposal.

Even the most difficult things, like the mystery of the Trinity, or Christ become man, are, after all, not so obscure. The basic concept is clear, even though stretched to the limit. It is clear, at least, if you replace the symbols in which it is expressed by less complex ones, simpler and more elementary, like those of certain primitive peoples.

To put it briefly: you have legs, the road is open, and you can walk on it. There may be obstacles; there may be surprises; there may be scares. But you can go ahead. One solid point has been established.

And I may say that the second part also should be clear to you now. You know perfectly well what the absurd is. First of all, because, wittingly or unwittingly, you yourselves live in the absurd. It is the life of our time, after all. In the most absolute sense. The rocket to the moon, for instance—what has it got to do with the traditional low-cost housing project for a three-story building that you are working on right now? What has the Great Wall to do with the evening dress of Mrs. John Doe? Or abstract painting with the cripple you met on the square?

There are really absurd things today. In one and the same quarter of Los Angeles you may witness today the birth of a colonial house together with that of a Victorian one, and a pseudo-Gothic house side-by-side with an ultra-modern one in concrete and glass. In one and the same exhibition you may see a "realistic" painting, pulp-magazine-cover style, and, right next to it, a so-called abstract painting, sophisticated, in only one color on a black ground. You see supermodern Americans, used to the "perfect" home with its gadgets and comforts, in this old Europe of ours, in our now "uninhabitable" medieval quarters, in a filthy, greasy, and depressing joint, perhaps, hunting for an affectionate gesture, for the sadness of a look from wine-happy eyes with a reflection of some lost

paradise in the background of dilated pupils; or hunting for the flesh of a thousand-lire whore, a poor peasant girl come to town for a maid's job, left with child by the boss or his adolescent son, thrown out of the house, if she was lucky, with ten thousand-lire bills, picked up by a pimp on Thursday night at eleven o'clock in the public gardens, put, half disgusted, half pleased, into the sad business of cashing sperm of all kinds in return for a black patent-leather purse or a half-length coat of cat fur, spicing her kisses with sophisticated dirty-words. But then, maybe, when she washes afterwards, singing a song of her village, of her people, it makes your flesh creep because it is so true, so full of nostalgia, of hope for her future, when the golden prince will come and kiss her, and she and the prince and their children will live happily and peacefully ever after.

And then there is culture. That is, the testimony of those who lucidly fell into this state of absurdity and objectivated its reality. More than a century of history is on hand—history we are leaning on, history we are feeding on—to demonstrate the absurd. And you need not even be a man of culture. The cows on a Van Gogh corn field, Dostoevski's possessed, Picasso's monsters, Kafka's metamorphoses, Camus' strangers have by now passed into the blood of men, and you can find them even in the design of a dress, even in the last neon light down the avenue; perhaps even in the fashionable bodywork of the latest American car.

Sometimes it is enough to step into a new bar to hold all the absurdities of this world in your hands. Or, more exactly, under your feet, around your body, above and below, head-on and from the side, outside and inside. Yes, inside too, because if you listen to yourself from inside, you really no longer know who you are or what you are. There is no longer any difference between your heart and the pump of the central heating system, that aspires and compresses. Between your brain and the electronic calculator. Between your lungs and the fireplace bellows. You are in a state of hallucination. You look around, into

the faces of the others. They are in a state of hallucination. The earth is no longer the earth. Your body weight is no longer subject to gravitational forces.

You step out and look at the moon. It's just like the round nineteenth-century street lamp, shedding a yellow light. No use looking for a dark corner in a crooked little medieval street, to find a brick that is still a brick, wood still wood, nails still nails. Useless to sit down on the ground in a corner and look up to see whether it's still the sky up there, or whether it, too, has become painted cardboard. Useless, even, to cry, to cry desperately like a little child. There is no way of return. The future is not behind you. The future is there in front of you. You must pass through that bar. You must pass through those chrome-plated machines for *espresso* coffee, that matching chrome-plated machine for ice cream; you must pass through those white neon tubes, through that little red plastic table. More than that: you must pass through that heart of yours that has become a pump, through that brain of yours that has become a machine, through those lungs that are bellows. No use crying and despairing. You must go through it. Either you are stuck in the absurd, or you pass beyond it. To the other side of it, where you will find the logical world; if you find it. But, for the time being, all you have in your hands is the absurd.

My dear young people, I see that you have understood me.

And now to *our* world. Let's pass on to that "logical" world, that "true," "structured," "organic," and "necessary" world. That world in which life is worth while, in which your acts have meaning, the only world in which we can "exist."

But this is not easy to explain. One time it was possible to say: "Knock, and it shall be opened unto you." It was possible to say so because it was also said that there was a Father. And a Father opens when a son knocks at the door, even if the son is a good-for-nothing, even if he is a prodigal son. At one time it was possible to say this. But

how can you say today to anyone, "Knock, and it shall be opened unto you," if, in good conscience, you are unable to say, "There is a Father who will open for you"? And yet that old saying is still true in a way. That is where faith comes in. But what faith can a man have who lives in the absurd?

At one time you could say: "Suffer, because you shall inherit the kingdom of heaven." But how can you say today: "Suffer, but you won't have any reward at all"? At one time you could say: "All the world's evil exists because man lives in sin." But how can you say it today? If you look for sin, you won't find it anywhere, not in the stone in the river bed, not in the big fish who eats the little fish, not in the son who kills his mother, not even in the cruel and imbecile dictator who scientifically murders millions of people in gas chambers.

And yet, and yet, even this is logical, for him who lives in the logical world. Everything is logical, even the most immoral act, even the most absurd act. And all this even without having faith. All this even without having hope. All this even without having charity. But how can anyone make this understood in the course of one lesson, or within one chapter of a book, in the banal meaning of words, if, maybe, one has labored years and years to make one person understand it without her being able to get it? And, mind you, not just any person, wicked, banal, stupid, vain. Quite the contrary: a person, better than oneself, perhaps more exceptional and more intelligent, certainly more true. And yet, nothing. One did not succeed. Because it may happen, when one does something, that his deed may seem in contradiction with his thought; yet this is not because he had been thinking nothing at all, not because there are no standards in the logical world, nothing fixed, nothing unchangeable. The standard is intrinsic in the act committed, not outside of it, in such a way that it can be used as a measuring rod.

Take an example. I am here at this table. Things are alive. But for me they are, at the same time, already dead.

Outside the sun is shining. And yet, for me, it is dead. What sense is there in the life of the sun if I know that it must die, even though after millions of years? My daughter Milena is sitting in the armchair next to me. She is sixteen. She is a very pretty girl. She is reading a book. All of life is still ahead of her. And yet, for me she is already dead. What meaning can her life have for me if it is sure to be all over in a given time? Here I am. Forty-two years old. And I don't know how many more years are to come. But they are years that hold no more surprises. I know all that lies ahead of me. By now, it is all foreseen. Decadence is bound to set in. The cells of my body are growing old. All sorts of pains will begin. A slow and gradual loosening of my grip on life, while death comes nearer, slowly or rapidly. But what meaning can death itself have, if the sun is already dead; my daughter here next to me, dead as well; and I too dead? Really, do you still believe in those silly and meaningless apparent realities of life?

Dead, dead and buried. The worms have long since eaten away my rotted flesh. Even the bones have been squashed; they have become, maybe, egg shells, a calcium shot for a delicate child. And yet I am alive. And glad to be alive. Not happy about anything, but I exist.

Try to explain the relationship between my hand and the sand that slowly runs through my fingers; between the warm sunlight and my closed eyes, become fireballs in space; between my flesh—mine—and the sweetness of a kiss!

And all this without reason, without any problem, just because there is the mystery, just because the gates of death are broken down, man's taboos are destroyed, all the dualisms of history done away with; and you have finally become you, existing, fit to live and nothing else. Oh, yes, try to make that comprehensible.

Try to explain that it is possible to look into the eyes of a woman and have her completely. That, on the other hand, you could go to bed with her all night, know her body as if she had been your mistress for ten years, and

yet—try to explain it—you wouldn't betray anything or anybody. Whereas you may betray everything and everybody with another woman, without even smiling at her. Without saying as much as a kind word to her. Try to explain the meaning of generic flesh and individual flesh! Try to explain the meaning of new virgin flesh at the age of forty! Try to explain what you mean by the pure perception of the world! Try to explain that in that state of pure perception the music of Bach, Vivaldi, or Beethoven becomes simple noise to your ear; that a painting by Cimabue or Piero della Francesca becomes a picture postcard. Try to explain that the whole world, up to this date, and with nothing excluded, is still curled up and contorted in the entrails of primordial chaos, still full of fear! Try to explain that we have to start again from scratch! Try to explain succinctly that thought has entered law like blood and that man has landed finally in that paradise which people, since time immemorial, have projected upon the beginning of time, while, in reality, it is yet to come, nay, we are about to land on it like a ship on a new continent, on this planet called Earth!

And yet, my dear young people, there is nothing else to do but try. Try this new world.

Later on, when I shall try to explain to you how to project those silly and still-mistaken things which we call houses, which for external reasons cannot become objective or belong to the earth, but can only be planked down on it—later on, I shall try to show you at least some possibilities. Possibilities of space. Possibilities of materials. Possible substances of this new world. As for today, I have told you all that I could tell you, within the measured time of a lecture, within the numbered pages of a chapter, within the limited possibilities of my existence.

Perhaps this "logical world" is not yet clear to you. Perhaps. But I can tell from your eyes that the poison of clarity has been injected into your blood. Only a minute dose, easily assimilable. It won't hurt you the way it has hurt me. When you leave the school, it will seem to you

that nothing has happened. On the square you will meet the usual people and will exchange with them the usual phrases. Nothing has changed. You'll go home and eat and you'll go on living as usual. Nothing apparently will have changed. And no *deus ex machina* has descended to bring you the truth.

And the truth does not exist, because the truth exists only where the lie exists, too. What sort of truth do you want in a logical world where no lie can exist?

Don't cheat at the game, that is what matters. At any game at all. What matters is that you understand that, if you put a mark on a white sheet of paper, it must be a conscious mark, that will become a wall. What matters is that that mark must not be a symbol, a narcotic, it must be nothing but an existential relation with other things that live, have their being on this earth. Only then will your architecture be a testimony to an action you have lived in a world where people can engage in vital and conscientious actions.

The doorman comes back into the classroom. He doesn't say anything. He smiles. I look at him. I smile.

"Goodbye, young people." They answer, "Goodbye."

Something has happened! The air around is alive. My students are no longer complete strangers, completely unknown to me. We are a little less alone. I walk down the stairs. I go and get the car. Yes, I tell myself, the state has paid me. I have earned my salary.

But while I am driving home my head begins to spin and I feel nauseated, so great the strain has been. I feel like crying like a little boy. And I know why.

For a little while at least I have been Anonymous (20th Century).

## 2

# Happiness and Unhappiness of Man

Strange how this book is coming into being. I have thought about it for years. I don't know how many times I have organized its structure, its composition. I have studied some of its effects as if I were a stage director. Like a camera man I mentally did the shooting of so many feet of film. Then, on the moviola, I timed it and adjusted its rhythms.

And yet, it is not coming out the way it was planned. Even those parts that seemed definite and sure are changing under my hand.

I notice that I am working the way I do when I am planning a piece of architecture or making a painting. I face a blank sheet or a canvas, freely loaded with the reality that I carry within me, and the thing comes into being and develops by itself.

This is what is happening with this second chapter. In my mind it was to be an abstract chapter, a sort of essay on human happiness or unhappiness. As though I stood outside the argument as a kind of arbiter or judge. But I had to wipe the whole thing out of my mind and tear up the pages already written.

The starting point must be the living flesh.

I'll start with me and my wife, and say: We are not happy.

At the moment I am writing this, she is lying on her bed and trying to rest. It is eleven A.M. No one should be



sleeping at this hour. I am in the garden, under a bower of vines, and the grapes are beginning to ripen. I am writing on a marble table. I feel like a dog. A dog who watches over the sleep of his mistress, and, at the same time, a whipped dog.

Last night we quarreled.

Yes. Just like everybody else, we quarrel sometimes.

My wife and I are not happy. That is a pity.

We are not happy, although destiny has given us all the reasons for being so.

Now I must find out why: whether it is our fault, or whether it is not anyone's personal fault, or whether it is everybody's fault and no one's.

You, dear reader, will probably judge the case according to your own personal state. You will judge it differently. But that does not matter. We are all in the same boat.

As a matter of fact I don't know any one single happy person. If such a person existed, it would be so extraordinary that life would be entirely different.

Yes. There are serene people. Others who have found a certain peace. Others who, hoaxing themselves, live through illusions. But there are no really happy persons. Because the condition for happiness is not to be lonely.

And men are lonely.

That is, there is not one man on earth in whom one can put absolute and total trust. Sooner or later, in one way or another, one's trust will be betrayed.

You will understand that these conventional words, happiness and unhappiness, contain man's whole existence, from the moment when he first appeared on earth. They contain everything: good and evil, heaven and hell, life and death, here and beyond.

Religion, philosophy, art, science, politics: every field of human action is contained within these two banal and rhetorical terms: the happiness or unhappiness of man.

If I write this chapter, it is because I honestly think I have in my hands a certain key which will open a new way

out. I said key. I did not say rule, or concept, or dogma, or truth, or solution.

I want to say only that I can see, through the experience that life has given me, a possible way out of this dead-end road into which man, I think, has gotten himself today.

I said key. I could equally well have said testimony, or, simply, hunch, indication. I want to make it quite clear that nothing of a divinatory, magic, metaphysical, transcendental nature should be read into these words.

It is only what life itself, in all its aspects, has suggested.

We are not happy, I said.

What matters now is to see whether and how we can get out of this unhappiness.

This is not a simple matter. Because happiness or unhappiness does not depend merely on how you make love, whether you are polite to each other, whether there is spiritual and physical satisfaction. No, to be happy means to maintain an equilibrium with the world.

Take an example.

I wake up in the morning. Before getting out of bed, I need a cup of coffee. Perhaps this is a genuine need, perhaps it is a conditioned reflex. That does not matter. The fact remains that if my wife is not in the room, I begin to shout—just jokingly, of course—“Coffee! Coffee!” until someone hears me and brings me a cup. Then I go to the bathroom and read the paper. The morning paper can be read in a thousand different ways. I read it in order to begin life with the others.

Of course I know what a lot of baloney, exaggeration, one-sided, unobjective reporting is written up every morning in the papers. But even though I know it, this reading of the paper in the morning is for me a way, as I said, of being with the others.

You can read the paper in an offhand way, then get up, take your shower or bath and brush your teeth. After that you take another cup of coffee, with hot milk this time. You look at the sun, or at the gray clouds, you bless this

day, and take a good long stretch. What happiness. And now, ready, set, go! Looking forward to the day's regular work! How beautiful life is!

But to me this never happens.

The reading of the paper, unfortunately, has another effect on me. Today it is an act of political bad faith that obstructs something of general and dazzlingly obvious usefulness. Tomorrow it is the brute that rapes a fourteen-year-old girl out in the suburbs and leaves her with a trauma for the rest of her life. The day after tomorrow it is a racing boat whose screw tears up the body of an unfortunate vacationer during his peaceful morning swim. Routine stuff. There are certain days when the news, taken all together, makes up a masterpiece of idiocy, wickedness, human impotence, in comparison with which the works of Dostoevski seem pale. In these, the artist finds meaning; in the paper there is none. Simply none. Brutally, inadvertently, when you get up in the morning, a charge of abominable suffering explodes in your face as a morning greeting!

You might rightly say: If the reading of the paper has this effect on you, give it up!

If I don't read the paper, it's all the same. So I don't read it, and when I go out, that morning, with my eyes open, all I have to do is to look at the faces of the people walking in the streets, and the effect is exactly the same: the same load of suffering to swallow. That's what you get for breakfast, right after waking up.

And then, the whole day is still ahead of you!

To keep my balance, there is only one remedy: an equally strong charge of vitality and of positive human truth, to outweigh this negative charge.

My wife does not read the papers. She is busy with other things early in the morning. She has to wake up the kids and get them off to school. It is a simpler and perhaps more truthful way to start the day. But she too is an intelligent human being. In one way or another, suffering and anxiety will grip her guts too.

Now let us try to be happy together. What we need, together, is two charges of vitality and truth powerful enough to last the whole day, to outweigh the negative charges.

I throw up my hands. I confess our powerlessness, our incapacity for happiness.

Sometimes, when this anxiety has driven me to a state of near coma, I face my wife and say: "Darling, we are intelligent human beings. We *can* get out of this impasse. After all, it is not impossible. We don't need states of divine grace or of euphoria. We don't need anything of a transcendental nature. All we have to do is face one another, within the human condition. Just as we are. Now, for instance, it is evening and night is falling: 6:45 P.M. There has been a thunderstorm today. Quite an exceptional one. With lightning and thunder that were simply marvelous. What more do we need? Nothing. All we have to do is to feel the place that each one of us occupies in the air.

"To feel our feet against the solid earth. To look into each other's eyes, as if we saw each other for the first time. A state of watchfulness. Of constant readiness. As if we were already dead. In a virginal state. To fulfill, fulfill existence together. Softly, softly the heart can be felt beating as if the blood were melting. The eyes. A smile. The air is alive. Life is beginning. Men are being born. Men are dying. Men are working. Men are sleeping. Men . . . Human beings . . . Men are living."

And likewise all the rest. Those floor tiles! That potted cactus! The daisies in that green flower vase! And the sea, too, now beyond the reach of our eyes. And the stars, out of sight. The sweetness. This marvelous sweetness. The trustfulness. Not to be alone. But that does not happen.

It does not happen because something has changed. There is something new in the air. Because happiness can no longer be related only to two or to several persons in a moment of grace, individuals locked in their personal or partially collective egotisms.

Take an example. An obvious example.

Let's have a look at a tree.

With its roots, trunk, branches, and leaves.

If the leaves are green this means that the tree is healthy.

If the leaves are dry in the spring, this means that the tree is unhealthy.

Man, who is outside the tree, is easily aware of this.

If the tree is unhealthy, he will try to cure it.

But the leaves are not aware of it. They are inside the organism.

Let us suppose for a moment that they are capable of thinking, but unable to realize that, together, they make up the tree. Here is what a leaf might think, in such a situation:

"Green I am and beautiful, and I hold a privileged position. I am high up. In the sun. The first drops of rain that fall are mine. I am the chief."

And another: "Poor and hapless am I, a sad sick thing. Way down below, in the shade. Dried and withered. God has not been kind to me."

Thus every leaf has its own thoughts.

Man's reasoning about the tree is not that silly. But about himself he reasons just that stupidly.

Man thinks like a single leaf. He believes he is alone. Free, detached from the others. That is why he doesn't give a hoot for the others.

If, by any chance, he loves them, he does so for ethical reasons, not out of a collective consciousness. Deep in his mind man is not aware of his own roots, his trunk, his branches. And yet he is nothing but a leaf. When I am in a crowd, sometimes I amuse myself with strange sensations. I imagine, for instance, that the air is colored—the air that circulates through everybody's lungs. If you think of that, you'll see one single tree. The tree of mankind.

And the tree of mankind is very ill today. That's why all of us feel miserable and alone. If only we could at last be two together outside of love! If only we could put total

and absolute trust in another human being! If only we could cease for once to be alone!

Sometimes I think:

Christ on the cross. But how could he redeem humanity, bring mankind the happiness of existence, if he died alone and desperate on his cross? But what if a man and a woman had died together on the cross, not lonely and not desperate! Then man could really believe in happiness on earth!

That's what I mean. Love is not enough to create happiness. My wife and I, I said. I could just as well have said: my children and I. My friends and I. The people I meet on the street and I. The others and I—those I don't even meet.

I started out by saying that my wife and I are not happy. The same is true for you and your wife, or your girl friend.

In certain moments, it is true, you can reach an equilibrium, that is, you can arrive at a state of truth that brings happiness within reach. But life is an everyday life, each day made up of so many hours.

I am capable of achieving happiness for a moment. But the unhappiness of other people dilutes our own happiness and cancels it.

It is really nobody's fault.

We can be happy. Walk along the sea, barefoot, walk along in sweet beatitude, and all of a sudden you hear a voice: "You pig."

You turn around in amazement. There is no one.

You pig!

Inasmuch as there is no one on the beach but me, there can be no doubt but that I am the pig that is meant.

I stop, I sit down, scrunched up like an embryo, and watch the sea.

A flat and livid sea.

If anybody should happen to fall from the sky onto this surface, I think he'd surely be smashed to smithereens like a sheet of glass falling on a rock.

I am overcome by certain sensations.

If I were a heathen, perhaps, I should now hear the voice of spirits; if I were a mystic, the voice of the Lord; a romantic, the voice of the dead; but all I am is a man cowering on the beach.

The truth of the matter is that no one at all has said "you pig." Nobody could, because I am all alone.

But I feel the reality of the others. I feel it just at the moments of happiness. I feel the reality of the face-mask of the village idiot, of the millions of Jews in the gas chambers, of the motherless child. I feel the reality of an airplane crash; of modern slavery; I feel the reality of the news the paper brings me every morning. Human piety is no longer adequate, nor even Christian charity.

Collective suffering lies heavy on our personal happiness.

My wife and I. Dear old wife. I've dragged you into this thing, you and me. Just so as to be human, to be like everybody else.

And I said at the outset that we are not happy.

But we must not let that get us down. Every unhappiness is the result of the suffering of all mankind.

We may stretch out on the roof terrace and look into the sky and feel happy, but the thoughts of all the others are wandering through the air. We don't see the others, we don't hear their lamentations. Apparently everything is calm and sublime. But collective consciousness hangs in the air, permeates every pore of our skins. All that is ugly on earth is the fruit of man's suffering; this lies heavy on our chests.

No one can get away from this reality, either consciously or unconsciously. It belongs to everybody.

Dear old wife, all we can do is to share our hours with those of the others, and try to be happy by fashioning our hours in the image of the human condition, the condition of all.

Only in that case can it happen that our embrace, our smile, our simply holding hands, may become to some extent the embrace of all, the smile of all, the handclasp

of all men. This is the only way left for us to try, and it has nothing to do with ethics; it is linked to the collective consciousness of man.

From what I have said, it seems to me that one basic thing unmistakably follows: If a man is conscious of this present epoch, he knows that there is no such thing as individual, egocentric, solitary happiness. The happiness of every man today is conditioned by the happiness of all. Personal happiness is conditioned by collective happiness.

Any suffering or unhappiness of another or of others has its direct repercussions on the individual.

Personal happiness in daily life therefore will be attainable only when mankind is able to live in a harmonious world, in a state of felicity. Every man's individual happiness, one might say, depends on the average measure of happiness reached by mankind on earth.

This morning the sun is shining again. The sun that everybody had been longing for, after so many days of rain. The vines needed it to ripen. The walls, to dry. Man, to feel better.

I have begun this day, as I begin every day, by reading the paper and being hit by the world's suffering. Now the sun is penetrating my body, charging it with truth and vitality, and I feel well. This is one of those moments of compensation between the suffering of all and the happiness of all.

I stop and think. This state of well-being, this state of equilibrium with all the things of this world—perhaps it should not be called "happiness." The French word *bonheur* is perhaps more precise. Less rhetorical and absolute. More gentle and human. It would be even more exact to call this state of mind "fullness." To be full, not empty. Since we are dealing here with natural things, we should not really talk any longer of happiness and unhappiness: two dialectically opposed terms. One exists because the other exists. If one of the terms is canceled, the other is canceled too. But then this will become a problem of



semantics. Among ourselves, we may talk plainly. What is sure is that, inasmuch as I have reached a rare state of equilibrium with the world this morning, I can call myself, in vulgar terms, "happy." I am clad in this particular, specific, and so to speak, modern happiness that could be defined as "the happiness of Anonymous (20th Century)." It is therefore not the happiness of the heathen, for example, or that of the Christian. It is the happiness of the man who is simultaneously subject and object.

I think of St. Paul who said, "For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now." The whole creation, and not only man. I can say more: "For we know that the whole creation fulfills itself."

I think of St. Francis and of his *Praises of the Creatures*, and something similar happens. This state of felicity is something rather like it.

"Sister water."

"Brother wind."

"Leaf bathed in sunlight!"

Today we are all one family. All relatives. But while I am in this state I am aware of one detail that makes it different from that of St. Paul or that of St. Francis. There is the "I," the "ego." Humanism has passed over this earth; and romanticism, too. The "I" exists.

I might say that St. Francis on that particular morning was happy the way I am. Only that he was still abstract, not incarnate. He was just one of God's creatures. But I am not. I am a specific creature. He was Anonymous (14th Century). I am Anonymous (20th Century). I and the others. And yes, why not?—I and this table. This particular table on this particular terrace. Not I and just any table. It is a table on a terrace. I believe that when Christ spoke of the resurrection of the body, he said a very true thing, but erred about the dimension of time. According to him, we die in order to get our body back in the beyond. Instead, we die on this earth in order to get our body back here on this earth. One dies, that is, on this earth as

Anonymous (14th Century), in order to be reborn as Anonymous (20th Century). That is the secret of any happiness to come, that really is the key.

Perhaps the biologists will say some day that it is all a matter of differences in the nervous system. But that neither lowers nor raises the level of the problem. Especially inasmuch as I believe that man has only an instrumental value on earth. Man is preparing another thing that will no longer be man. It is just this that gives happiness. To be a tool, and to know how to use this tool well. To have a different nervous system, which fulfills the world differently.

Man's problems are not metaphysical. They are simple, elementary, natural. What it comes down to is that you have to make good use of yourself after having got well integrated in this world.

At this particular moment, for instance, when I am, so to speak, happy, I should do well whatever I might set out to do: plan a piece of architecture, or wash my face. There would be nothing gratuitous, nothing arbitrary, therefore, about any of my actions.

How marvelous, this possibility: to have stepped out of the myth, to have overcome the absurd, to be happy within the logic of this world!

That afterwards I might also get screwed, does not matter. The only thing that matters is that this possibility exists.

When I was still a boy and I wanted to gauge the reality and truthfulness of a piece of work of mine, I used to compare my drawings with a skull. If a sketch could not stand this comparison, that meant that something was wrong. At this moment I can bear the thought of a skull, or of the torn body of a woman in labor, or of my father's death-agony, and thus I am sure that my state is real.

There is nothing exalted, nothing intellectual about this state of happiness. It is natural. So true is it, that our cleaning-woman's boy, who would never dare come near

me while I am working, is here right now, at my side: bothersome as the flies that are humming around me, he is reading a Mickey Mouse comic book. If this "state" persists, he is going to lay his magazine right on my table in a minute. This may seem just a joke, but to me it is important.

In this state of mind let me now try to turn my thoughts to problems of architecture. The way I should turn them to economic questions if I were an economist, or to medicine if I were a doctor.

I think, for instance, of the way town planners and architects approach certain problems. I think of the way a town or a borough should be conceived, according to them. The way they plan in general. Whether the buildings should be high or low, whether there should be one-family houses or many-family houses, three-story buildings or skyscrapers with many floors. It would never occur to them to think, for instance, of the happiness or unhappiness of man. To them it seems a logical problem. Perhaps it is a rational problem, but certainly not a logical one. What does it matter if the house has three or twenty floors? What good does it do to make sandwiches of human unhappiness? One slice of bread, one slice of ham, one slice of bread . . . Or put them horizontally: a little train of slices of bread, slices of ham, slices of bread. That's what it comes down to: to make a tower of the floors, unhappy human beings, ceilings. Or to make a little train of floors, unhappy human beings, ceilings, all in a straight line.

To plan. To plan human unhappiness. No. I just don't feel like going on this way. Let us start from the possibility of human happiness, and the problems are posed in a different way. Planning there will always be, but now we are planning human happiness. Later on, in the following chapters, I shall have something more specific to say on this topic.

For now, this is enough for me. To look at the sun, to look at these mountains and this plain. To imagine the

sea which is just a few hundred yards away from where I am staying now, and to visualize the future city, our city, a city fit for us to live in. And I assure you that, without being futurists, or prophets, we can really create in our minds a happy city built for happy men.

Or, to put it in still simpler terms: a city that takes the possibility of happiness into account. If you look at it this way, all this human intelligence, applying itself to things that are merely experimental but not yet true—such as our painting, our architecture—all this intelligence seems as yet a barbarous, pretentious, vain thing.

Sure enough, modern man is intelligent. Intelligent, yes, but not sufficiently so to notice that men today are unhappy and that we must begin from scratch. All that we have today are merely means—formidable means, such as have never existed before, but still only means.

What we have to do now is roll up our sleeves and begin anew. This is the earth. I furrow the earth. I implant the roots of what men used to call houses. The city is being born: simple, truthful. For him who looks at it from a distance, to him who comes from the sea, it is not a city that appears, or villages, or houses, but a single composition, if you want to use an academic term: a composition made of hills, of trees, walls, spaces, and colors, where men live free, anonymous, and happy.

And this time it is no longer the apparent happiness of the Greeks, secure within the walls of their perfect acropolis built at the cost of the lives of millions of slaves. Nor is it the happiness of medieval Christians, forced as they were to defend within walls their felicity in the beyond—beautiful, harmonious walls, organic parts of the landscape, but still walls against someone, whether brigand or infidel.

This time nothing will be detached from the earth. All the things that man will see, including the things made by him, will be so natural, so true, that it will seem as though they had always existed; as though they were existing, existing and immutable like all things that are born,

live, and die. Odysseus could land here, or Orpheus, or even a Martian, without being surprised. At most they might marvel, the way you marvel at the sight of the black sea in the night, with the white sailboats pulled up ashore; the way you marvel when you look into the starlit sky, or the face of the woman who walks with you along the beach.

# 3

## Subjective and Objective

The problem is to find out whether, in this world of ours, geographically unified but spiritually, politically, and socially still divided as it is, men can find a minimum common denominator among themselves. More than that, even. The question is whether men are able to establish—outside of myth—a common basis, a platform, on which to build together, to live together on a reconciled earth.

To put it in different words, the question is, whether in a world divided among mutually contradictory norms and rules, there is one rule that summarizes them all, that incarnates them all; or one non-rule that makes a free existence possible for all.

Is man, looking out for the first time from the window of what is called liberty, really able to live as a free man and no longer as a slave? History unfortunately shows that up till now only slavery has been capable of imposing order and making life possible.

Certainly not liberty.

But let us leave liberty aside for the moment—a word that assumes a different sound in different ears and swings between poles so distant that the alternating movement of its pendulum covers all the civilizations of the past, none excluded.

The moment has come when we must try to understand one another *within* the words, within the very ambiguity of the words. The moment has come when we must be able to live *outside* the wonted use of words,

outside any form of communication, unless it be the pure act of existence.

If we want to use the jargon of the philosophers, we may talk in terms of subjectivity and objectivity.

But what we say should be understandable also to the market-woman, whose life is worth just as much as that of the greatest philosopher on earth. The market-woman hasn't ever heard of such a thing as "objective" and "subjective," but when she gives an apple to the little boy with the running nose, who has been looking rapturously at that basket of fruit, she performs a pure existential act, purer, perhaps, and more existential, than any act that that great philosopher has ever been able to perform.

Now where are we to start, if the attempt to demonstrate this new attitude is not to be conceptual, that is, if it is not to originate from a center, lest the function of any such center be dictatorial in some way?

I could start with the fact that I have children. How I educate my children. What I tell these children, who represent life in ascent more than I whose life by now is on the descending part of the parabola.

But this, too, is dangerous. Dangerous because it may easily become abstract.

I had better start from my job.

Everybody has his friends. In general, most of your friends, if not the best of your friends, belong to the sphere of your job. Thus it happens that many of my friends are architects and painters.

Generalizing, I might say that my painter friends are today in a subjective position, while the architects, on the contrary, try to hold an objective position.

This is the reason why painters and architects today, on the whole, do not understand one another well. The architects say that the painters are frauds. The painters say that the architects are people who have nothing to do with art. A critic might say that the painters, in their painting, are much more *avant garde* than the architects, but that psychologically they are more conservative and

romantic. The painters defend their position of liberty and subjective creation; the architects renounce any freedom, including even the freedom to be objective.

And, after all, there is some logic in their attitude. It is not dictated by chance. Architecture, if we want to use a fashionable word, is a more *social* art. Painting, if we want to use a striking word, is an art for the initiated.

All of us must live among the products of modern architecture. Everywhere we look there are schools, hospitals, and low-priced "popular" housing projects.

Nobody, on the other hand, is forced to buy a painting or to look at one in a museum of modern art.

It is around this double, almost equivocal, position, in my opinion, that the errors in interpreting the words subjective and objective gravitate. There are architects who want to remain faithful, above all, to their position of social responsibility, and thus they renounce architecture altogether and fall into the *métier* commonly and wrongly called "contractors and builders," whose products, in general, do not possess even one of the characteristics that mark what can be called a modern building.

And there are painters who don't give a hoot for their responsibility toward the "others"; they take to dope and merely try to exteriorize their subconscious, without bothering to question whether this subconscious is truly subconscious, or is simply their sex urge, or worse, the effects of their personal belly-ache.

There are also, of course, the so-called realist painters who boast of their social responsibility, but we can leave them out of our consideration, because what they produce is not painting but only advertising. Not paintings, but posters, in better or worse taste.

Sometimes it is enough to look at a joint exposition of architecture and painting, to become aware of the enormity of the *décalage* that exists between them.

What, after all, is the relationship between a low-cost housing project for working men, constructed no matter



where, and the red blotch on a red background that is an avant-garde painting?

It is necessary to try to understand what we mean when we say objective or subjective.

Men have always been see-sawing between an objective and a subjective position; they have never reached an equilibrium. One might say that there have been moments when they have reached an apparent equilibrium, and during those moments they were able to found magnificent civilizations. But it has always been a position of unstable equilibrium. The consequence, or, if you prefer, the crisis, is the *impasse* in which man finds himself today and which is due to just this lack of stability in all the positions of equilibrium he has ever reached.

Let us take a medieval town. The most beautiful medieval town in the world! You might think it legitimate to call it an objective town. But it is not. The most you can say is that there existed in that town a minimum common denominator. But it was not an objective one. Did the subject exist at that time? It most certainly did! The subject existed, and it was the most gigantic, the most dominating subject that ever appeared on earth. It was God, the Christian God.

Could there be anything more subjective, more dictatorial than a God, incarnate in Man, who, through this Man's voice has destroyed the gates of death, promised a paradise to the good, a hell to the wicked, and who has given precise commandments, apart from which there is nothing but eternal night?

Has anybody ever given more absolute answers to the mystery, without any possibility of proof, entrenched behind the dogmas of Revelation?

But this is God, you might say, not man; He "possesses" truth. More than that, He *is* truth. That does not change the picture. Even if it were true, the objectivity of the town has been paid for by the price of the subject.

God or man, truth revealed by God, or personal opinion of man—the fact remains the same. There is an imposition

from outside on the "others." An imposition which men must obey, even if they obey of their own free will. The price of this imposition is fear. Fear of God instead of fear of a dictator. But still fear.

And a city built on fear is not a city of free men; it is not a truly spontaneous city; it is not an existential city. It is, in the last analysis, not an objective city.

Let us have a look now at a Greek city: Athens. The least militaristic, the most serene, aristocratic, democratic city in all Greece, and perhaps in the entire world.

Did the subject exist in that city? Certainly! It was more hidden, perhaps, but equally strong, and even more cruel. Only the Athenians were cleverer than the Christians. Instead of one God, they had many. Cleverest of all, they even had one "Unknown God," of whom St. Paul speaks in the *Acts*, and who saved Paul himself from death.

A God Unknown. A door, open to all.

Those gods were easier to reach, in more direct contact with human beings. They came down to earth to sleep with women. And occasionally men were able to rise to Olympus.

What more do you want? But this was only the appearance.

Take a Greek temple. Compare it to a Christian Church. In the temple there is room only for the god. And his priest. The faithful have to remain outside. The Christian God at least had charity. He received the faithful in His house.

I would say still more: if the Christian God was absolute, the Greek gods were the personification of Greek concepts, custom-made for the Greeks and for no one else. The others were enemies. And defeated enemies were slaves. One might almost say that it was the ideas of men that became gods. Could there be anything more subjective than that?

An idea that becomes a god to be worshiped.

But Socrates must drink the hemlock. And there are slaves.

What can the perfection of a Greek temple mean to us, when we think of the lives of the slaves?

No, let's not talk of democracy, let's not talk of objectivity, when we talk of the Greeks!

One fine day in Florence, Humanism was born. It was the birth of something extraordinarily important. The subject, which up to that day had been projected outside man, finally entered man! After the thousands of years that had elapsed since man first appeared on this earth.

Just think of it: man trying to break his chains to feel free on this earth! Trying to be himself.

Himself. It is a strange thing. What do we mean by man himself, as compared to man as ant or man as number or man as son of God?

Just think of Leonardo da Vinci. How he must have suffered, that poor Leonardo.

The modern era is beginning.

At least for Western man it is beginning.

The city of Humanism, Florence, lies at my feet. I look down on it from above. I think of its geniuses. I think of the freed subject. I think of the good and the evil this city has brought to the world. If I think of a man who lived before the 15th century, or even if I think of a man living today but among those peoples and nations whom, one might say, Humanism has not yet reached except as a cultural notion—if I think of those men, a profound peace descends on my soul. How much simpler life was then! How much less ambitious life was prior to the discovery of the "I."

My personal tragedy, my "non-possibility to exist," is rooted in this very terrain, ground broken years ago, torn up and laid bare to the light of the sun.

There is nothing that I can see as clearly as this relationship: subject and object. Nothing else is for me so

intimate, so natural, so much paid for with my own hide.

Yet I don't succeed in taking the bull by the horns. For two hours now I have been walking up and down mulling over thoughts and ideas.

I think of what I have already written and what remains to be written.

I think of the reader, and of his reactions to what I have been saying. The reader notes the title of this chapter: "Subjective and Objective." An interesting chapter, by God! Then he reads. First the author speaks of his painter and architect friends. Then, all of a sudden, he adduces three examples of cities and civilizations. He deals with a mediaeval city, with a Greek city, and then with Florence. Strangely enough, he inverts the order of history (dealing first with the Middle Ages, then with Greece). He makes a basic discovery, if you want to call it that: God and the gods were the subject of the ancient civilizations. The apparent objectivity of these civilizations was paid for at that price. Which means that all the civilizations that preceded Humanism were falsely anonymous. Or, if you wish, they were anonymous in the etymological sense of the word, because in fact they were "without name," inasmuch as the "I" did not exist. Or at least it lay hidden in the darkness of each man's breast. It had not come out into the open daylight.

It is easy to be anonymous when there is no name because there is no "I"!

Then the author speaks of Florence, which discovered the "I."

Then he stops. This is indeed a strange author.

And if this reader saw me this morning, saw me now as I am writing, he would find this opinion confirmed.

In fact all I have been doing is to take up an inanimate object. A stone. Then I have examined an animate object: a butterfly that was fluttering from flower to flower. Then lastly I have thought of another human being.

Thus I said: stone, butterfly, man. I, the subject. Those three, in relation to me, objects of different kinds.

What did I do?

First I took the stone. Letting it bounce once in a while on my palm, I thought. I thought of all the different relationships that were possible between myself, the subject, and the stone, the object.

There. Man has a stone in his hand.

The stone is always a stone, but man changes.

There is savage man, the savage of ten thousand years ago, and the savage of today. He lets the stone bounce on his palm. He feels its weight, its form. He is crouched on his knees. Suddenly he rises, as though released. His arm becomes a lever. He hurls the stone into the sea. The savage is not an imbecile. He is only a savage. Perhaps no one realizes the existence of the stone as directly as he does. All you have to do is to look at something that is perceived by a savage, an object of wood, for example, and you will understand that the wood will never again be so really wood as it was for him. Perhaps only now, beginning from scratch, shall we be able again to realize wood as wood, but in a new way.

What this odd example means is that the relationship between object and subject really did not exist at that time, nor does it exist today among truly savage people. It was a life, at that time, that raised no questions.

Maybe those were happy times.

But questioning was intrinsic in man. And so the "whys" were born. The legend of a lost paradise. The apple of consciousness.

After that, a different kind of man takes the stone in his hand. For the first time he calls it "stone," or "*gluglu*"—it does not matter which. What matters is that he gives a name to some thing. He too, like the first man, lets the stone bounce on his palm, but this time he says: "stone, stone, stone, stone." Like a litany. A rhythm. A rhythm that grows packed, more carnal, frenetic. Neurosis overcomes him. "Stone, stone, stone!" he screams. "Stone!" At last he rises, and swelling out his lungs with terror and anger, he hurls the stone far out into the sea.

He really is afraid of the stone.

Thus the taboo of the stone is born.

What this second example means is that the relationship between subject and object begins to crystallize. The stone, at first connatural to man, detaches itself from him and becomes another thing; it becomes an object.

Another day comes, and another man takes the stone in his hand. The man is angry, but he makes a discovery; the stone is good for something. The stone serves to kill an animal. The stone becomes personified; it becomes first a power, and then even a god.

And so I could go on. Through the different relationships which man has had with the stone throughout history, we could show the evolution of the subject-object relationship at different moments in man's development.

If we now pass from the inorganic to the organic world—flower, butterfly, fish, cat, other man—these different stages of relationship would become so evident that they could almost be touched. The entire history of man is contained in this strange story of man and stone, or man and animal, or man and man. But the fact remains that even today, today as always, like all of you, I too still let the stone bounce on my palm; and a relationship exists, a new relationship is about to materialize on this earth, a new relationship between subject and object which will finally cancel this subject-object dualism and create that kind of existential relation between two realities, the reality of the stone and the reality of man: the relationship, I should like to call it, of Anonymous (20th Century).

Anonymous at last, not because it is without name; but because, even though having a name, it is unimportant.

The "I" is no longer "I and the others." Or "I with the others." It has become "We." All of us. Men, animals, ants, and stones.

Let us try to see what this new relationship between subject and object really means for men, or at least for some of them who, in their various fields, work at the most advanced points of human experience with full readiness and freedom in their research.

I want to make a little inquiry, which is fashionable today, anyway.

The questions I am going to ask are these:

What do you mean by subject and what do you mean by object?

What do you think is subjective, and what do you think is objective, in your particular field of work?

Do you think a new relationship between things can be established which would be no longer either subjective or objective?

We shall see what is going to come out of this. Because I really feel that, quite apart from semantics, or from any value judgment with regard to these words, something way down below is changing, something that I believe to be very important.

Thus I have talked with scientists, with philosophers, with artists. I have talked a bit with everybody. I have talked also with taxi drivers and store clerks.

I have tried to adapt my ways of speaking to theirs.

And the experiment has been quite successful.

Let us try to draw the conclusions.

The most interesting answers, from an intellectual point of view, I got from some of the scientists, I must admit; then came a certain number of philosophers particularly interested in social problems.

Summarizing all these answers, I could restate them thus:

Everybody is worried. Nobody has a precise reality in his hands, a reality that he could offer to his fellow men as a rule of life.

All the analyses of the world, of life, and of matter, which seemed to have arrived so close to their ultimate conclusions, are sinking as it were into a bottomless well. The harder an analysis is pressed, the farther the ultimate limit of knowledge recedes.

We have come to a point where the object itself is transformed through the very act of observation. We have come to a point where it seems theoretically impossible to get down to the elementary particle, whatever

it may be. We have arrived at a point where physics is rejoining metaphysics.

Beyond these drills that are boring into our knowledge, beyond these probes plunged into the universe, these steel blades that have quartered, dissected, analyzed everything, a veil of mystery spreads out, now as always, even though in a different way. Again man must ask himself: Who is the subject? And is what is about to appear again the face of God?

Thus our knowledge is in such a desperate state that we feel almost tempted to create once more a god, a myth, a hero. The sum total of man's millennial effort to tear down the gates of death, to find a justification for his existence, is apparently a failure. A failure, at least for us, who are living today. Even those who had fallen back on a humbler and simpler type of knowledge of an everyday, materialistic sort, have been thrown back, by their very method of research, into a metaphysical experience.

In the last analysis, the mystery remains.

When we come home at night, whether we be geniuses or poor devils, heads of government or street cleaners, you or I, we find ourselves in just the same state.

None of us knows how to behave.

We feel ill at ease.

Whether we be sceptics or optimists, men of faith or empiricists, clinging to ancient positions or sticking out our necks on the ramparts of an avant-garde culture, one thing is sure: we don't know where we are going.

We don't know whether man is monogamous or polygamous.

Whether women should work as men do or not. Whether children should belong to their families or to the collectivity. Whether the family should exist or not. Whether sardine fishermen and beggars, or the rich and the mighty, are the happier human beings.

To make it short: there is no possible norm, no standard of judgment, no guide.

Man seems lonely and orphaned on earth.



When each man, concentrated on himself, walks or thinks of the things of this world, there is no voice that answers.

The heavens are silent.

The world is becoming bigger all the time, if you want to see it that way. We are pushing the pillars of Hercules ever farther back, but the pillars of Hercules are still there.

What does that mean?

That man is passing through a dangerous moment in his history. Really we are living in an epoch of transition, and man is insecure. There is no greater danger than being insecure. Personally insecure. And collectively insecure.

The insecure man who does not know where to hide when the bombs are dropping from the plane, and stands there upright, looking around: that man is much more likely to be hit than the one who throws himself into the first hole he chances on.

All roads are open to the insecure man. The road that leads back to the position of the savage, or the road toward a god to worship, or the road of despair and suicide.

Also in the realm of politics, all roads are open to all. The road toward a new dictatorship, towards the first charlatan who presents himself on the public square. The road to revolution is open, and the road to anarchism.

Roads. Roads.

Roads that are no roads. Because we know that they lead nowhere. There is no metaphysical or physical paradise at the end of any of these roads. Roads that we know inch for inch and by heart, so many times has man tried them and so many times has he arrived at the impasse.

Do we really have to try them again? Do we really have to repeat all these errors?

If we want to have something secure in our hands, is it true that we must fall back on some old position, where the objective exists at the price of slavery, in whatever form or disguise, and the subjective exists only in the func-

tion of another subject, projected outside of us, whether we want to call it god or devil?

Must we really get tangled up in the net, like flies to be eaten by the spider of death?

Or shall we be able, at last, free within the new human condition, to look at a freed sky and a freed earth, in a reconciled universe?

What must we do then?

Are we really in a position to snatch the rosary out of the hands of the poor old woman who has found in the church peace and hope and a rhythm to her existence?

Are we in a position to kill the rich man only because in his wealth he has found his own kind of artificial paradise?

Are we in a position to inject into the blood of men a dose of lies enabling them to survive?

Are we, in other words, capable of offering a new rule that might replace all the existing and mutually contradictory rules?

I do not think so.

What do I think, then?

It's snowing outside. For exactly twenty-four hours it has been snowing incessantly. This city of three million inhabitants is paralyzed. The cars are abandoned on the streets and squares, buried under the snow. When I went out this morning, almost all the stores were closed. People didn't go to work.

And here I am, all by myself in my room, with five cups of coffee, a glass of milk and a glass of orange juice on my stomach.

What should I think of this world, snow-packed, paralyzed, apparently without any scope, just waiting for the blizzard to stop, the sun to come back, and tomorrow to begin?

What's there to do?

First of all, let's finish this cigarette; then shave, have a whiskey, and go to eat a bite in the first dreary place I

find open. Then go into one of the few cafés that exist in this city, and finish this chapter. I don't have galoshes; all I have is a pair of fairly heavy shoes. I shall sink into the snow up to my knees. I shall get soaking wet. I shall shiver with cold.

At the café I shall find other people. Anybody, even the most wretched outcast, has a few cents to go to a café and seek company. And if he has no money at all, he'll always find an open waiting room at a station, a warm grill over the subway, or a roof of straw and tin on four posts dug into a vacant lot. The only thing that matters is not to be alone. What matters is to see the face of another man, other eyes, other mouths, other noses. To feel that the air exists for all. And the earth, too.

Last night I didn't go to the restaurant, or even to the café. I called up a friend. And we spent the evening together, until late.

This morning I am at my desk, as usual. A steam shovel is at work outside, making an ear-splitting noise. A man is driving it. Indeed it's noisy company, but I bless the noise. It enables me to feel the man's presence nearby, even his muscular force.

All this is pretty far-fetched, you might say.

And perhaps you'd be right. Perhaps not. But for me it is essential for my brain not to have to work in a vacuum. For me it is essential for my thoughts not to become abstract. We are conditioned one way or another. We can work freely only if we accept our condition. If I were at home instead of being here, this chapter would be different. If I were at the seashore basking in the sun, it would be different still.

What matters is that you and I should be reasoning about our existence together: within the condition, within the condition of the words themselves, within the condition in which you are reading this book, for example.

That is what I mean. I said "together."

This, after all, is the key to this chapter.

So what do I think of this world?

At this moment a little story comes to my mind. The story of a man and a woman, lone survivors after an atomic war, who set out from the opposite ends of the earth, naked again; driven by an instinct to begin life anew, they walk until they meet each other.

It is a little story of no importance. What is important in it is the fact that these two human beings can start their existence again without bumping into anybody else. Let us assume that these two people are highly advanced culturally. And let us assume that they have assimilated the past in such a way that they do not have to recapitulate history because they carry it within themselves. And let us assume that they have all the technological knowledge of today at their disposal. Let us assume, finally, that all the tools of technology that man has ever invented had miraculously been saved from atomic destruction.

Thus we are putting these two people into an ideal position.

Here you have two human beings, man and woman, endowed with all the means. They do not have to toil, they are free to use all their time the way they please, without being enslaved to anyone!

We can project into these two people all the possibilities which man today has at his collective disposal.

What would they do?

That is the heart of the problem.

How would they justify their existence?

How would they break their solitude?

How would they behave towards each other, without wounding each other, without creating complexes, without doing harm to each other?

Would they have rules to follow?

Would they start from scratch like Adam and Eve?

Would they beget sons like Cain and Abel?

And would it go on like that, generation after generation, up to this day?

I think it would be different. History is inside of them.

These human beings would be able to live differently because their way of thinking has once again become organic.

Because thought, just like blood, can no longer detach itself and become so gratuitous as to create gratuitous actions.

They do not need so many things to live, because they have no taboos. They no longer need God, or the devil. They need neither prayers nor curses. For them there are no questions.

After centuries of history, at last, man has found his own human dimension.

At last, skin coincides with skin. Bones with bones. Breath with breath. Heart with heart. Brain with brain.

A gesture in the air is a gesture in the air, and nothing else. An amorous night is an amorous night, and nothing else. No one need fear any longer. And fear does so much harm to man. Their own masters at last, men would begin to make good use of themselves, to expend themselves well: in other words, they would begin to *exist*. We might even say that, prior to these two, men have merely lived (more or less badly), and then died. These people, on the contrary, *exist*.

At this point I might write a Utopia.

I could try to describe their daily actions. What gestures they make. How they wake up. How they eat. The way they sleep.

But this would become poetry.

It would also become my dictatorship. Because this poetry would arise from my own experience, not from theirs.

It would be born of all my desires: those that I have been able to satisfy, and even more those which have remained unsatisfied but which I long to satisfy. It would be born of my person, within the limits of my biological nature. But I cannot do that. I cannot because I really do not know what these people would achieve. Reconciled, at last, they might even manage not to eat at all but to transform

and assimilate matter directly; perhaps they would not take airplanes to fly because they would be able to fly without planes; they would be able, perhaps, to leave this earth and travel through space without rockets, space ships, or oxygen masks.

Perhaps. Nobody knows what man could achieve on earth, once he had arrived at this condition of existence. These are things that others may see, perhaps. When and how, is of no importance.

What is important is to understand that there is a possibility of existence beyond any rule. Beyond any problem. Beyond any revealed truth. Beyond even discovered truth. Because men will at last have reached an equilibrium. They will have found their dimension, their instrumental value.

All they have to do is to begin.

Man reconciled with the earth.

To wake up one morning. To wake up, with a woman at your side, and at last begin this existence.

To be able to wake up!

To be able to wake up, yes! But with a woman at your side.

With a woman with whom you are living. With the children who live with you. With the next-door neighbors. With the milkman, the baker, the mailman. To wake up with all of them. With all the human beings on this earth. And while you are waking up, others are going to sleep, because, where they are, it is night rather than day. That one over there is Chinese; the other one, African.

To be able to wake up in such a condition every day. Not the condition I described in my little story. That was merely an abstraction.

But the little story had its importance. The important thing was to try to show that there is a possibility. That there is the possibility of existing outside and beyond the rules, in a realm where the words subjective and objective no longer have any meaning because subject and object have become simply two moments of the same state of

existence, just as the act of breathing consists of breathing in and breathing out.

And thus it does not make sense any longer to look for an objective basis on which to found the rule; because everyone has found his own vital place in the world, and all men move and act and live without hurting one another, without offending one another, in a synthesis, and without taking away from anyone his own personal possibility of existing. To exist, without having tormenting questions hammer themselves into your chest like nails.

Is this right? Or is that other thing right? Or that third one?

For the human being who finally completes his action with grace, there is no questioning. There can be no questioning. Questions arise only when an action is unfortunate. Thus our badly executed actions are all unfortunate. All of them, that is, with the exception of those that arose, by chance, beyond our will: acts which at other times were given other names but which, taken together, were the outcome of abnormal conditions, not the work of simple men, poor devils, like ourselves!

But it is when the poor devils will be able to accomplish their actions with grace that man will have achieved his plenitude.

"The world is mysterious, but not absurd," I said in the first chapter. "The mystery offers the only possibility of existence," I say in the third chapter. If you wish to put it that way, if you really need a name for everything, you may say that the mystery is the only rule.

Thus, if I again take a stone in my hand today, and let it bounce on my palm, I feel that there is peace between myself and the stone. Or even osmosis. Stone, stone, stone! Stone, companion of my daily existence here on this earth, in this our joint adventure.

Stone, stone, stone!

If I compare you, the way you are today for me, with all the things created by men, I can't find one among them apt to arouse a sensation similar to the one existing be-

tween us. Nothing that has ever been expressed on earth has the flavor of our colloquy.

It is as though the earth had really emerged after a new deluge, and a new Adam and a new Eve—just as in my little story—were to set out on their way together, after their first meeting.

But all the other things are there too. They are, and they have a right to be. And no one can change the sensation that each one of us may have toward the stone.

And nothing remains to be done but to walk on this new road, with this new stone in our hand. The others are not wrong. But they are not right either.

Nothing is objective.

Not the subject that has become object.

Not the mathematical average of the subjects compared to the object. Not even the sum total of every subject's viewpoint toward the object.

There is a mountain.

The mountain is God, someone said, because it spat fire, and God hurls his lightning from there.

The mountain is all glaciers and snow!

The mountain is all pines and firs!

The mountain is all rocks!

Different points of views.

But the mountain is nothing but the mountain!

So what remains for us to do?

To walk together. To compare and confront.

The way the Christians won their day because they bore the signs of a serenity unknown to pagans, even when facing the lions in the arena.

If the mountain for us is truly the mountain, it may well be all glaciers and snow; it may well be all pines and firs; it may well be all rocks, because the mountain is the mountain!

If we have finally landed on this new world, everything that exists exists also for us, and nothing is alien to us: not one of all the credos, viewpoints, and opinions of other human beings.



A march of mutual rapprochement has begun. We do not know when or how this march will end. Because, by the time it ends, there may be no men left on earth. The only thing that matters is to begin and to understand that after all everything that happens is good because it is necessary.

I am aware that those who expected great things from me have been disappointed. But what could they expect of me, except the expression of an *n<sup>th</sup>* opinion? Did they expect one more rule to regulate life? But I know absolutely nothing *a priori*, because my knowledge is born, unfolds, and concludes in the very act I accomplish?

If there is someone who believes in polygamy, do you think I am in a position to tell him, "No, you must be monogamous"? Should I tell a Christian, "Be a Mohammedan"? Or a Mohammedan, "Be a Christian"?

Am I the one to tell them? The most I could say is this: man is monogamous, but also polygamous. I, for one, believe that you may be monogamous and polygamous with one single woman. But how much time did it take me to understand that! I could also say that in this world there is room for the Chalice and room for the Koran. But how long did it take me to arrive at this conclusion! Am I in a position to say things of this sort when often I am not able even to answer the questions my children ask me, except by talking to them in terms of their particular need of a particular moment? Through how much trouble and effort man will have to go before arriving anywhere!

How many houses, how many houses more will have to be built before the one that will no longer be a house! How many paintings will have to be painted before those that will no longer be paintings!

Thus I have come back to my job.

And to those who ask me questions, how difficult it is to answer: "Gentlemen, I have no rule to hand out. Subjective and objective are nothing." How difficult it is to give an answer to the questioner.

All I can tell my students during their question period is this: "What do you want, after all? Don't you know that to plan a piece of architecture on paper is all wrong? Don't you know that without a client, without the materials, without a precise budget, you can't plan a piece of architecture?" They would give me a dirty look. Especially in the United States, where they are used to paying something like two thousand dollars a year to study at a good university.

To pay two thousand dollars just to hear a professor say that it is all wrong to make abstract projects. That this is not the way to do architecture.

This year I have given them a difficult theme: the project of a village. That is, a theme where it is necessary to define what is subjective and what is objective. I have explained so many things to them. So many things. Above all, how to be honest, that is, to master all the elements on which they were working. And not one of them has said: If I am really honest, I cannot make any project at all. Not a single one. All of them believed they could be honest. Well, I must say that they cannot; and I could not either, if I were in their place. What does it mean to make a city when they do not have in their hands all the elements needed really to create a city?

And yet they go on working. Even today, Sunday, some of them are working, and I, on the lower floor, am writing that they are all wrong. Why don't I just run upstairs and tell them: "Boys, stop it! There is all that snow outdoors, all white. Get out into the snow! What you are doing here does not make any sense anyway!"

But even if it does not make any sense, it is not useless, either.

Because that's the way it is. When, in past history, have architects ever worked in the abstract, on paper, and without bricklayers? When could they have done such a thing, except in this absurd time in which we are living? And yet, here are the universities. That is the condition. We must

work within the error. We cannot stay outside and play big.

Gradually the errors will diminish. Gradually the solution will come nearer. Together, always together.

So keep working, boys, keep working! And peace be with you. You won't build cities, no. But, slowly, slowly, the stone on your palm will become something very different. And the day that you leave this place and go into the world and really build, I hope you will walk with the stone in your hand and say to it: Stone, stone! Stone, my companion on this earth in this our joint venture.

It will be then that the true city will come into being: not an objective city, nor a subjective city, but truly our city.

## **Abstract Man: The Source of Human Errors**

This new chapter should be simple, human, easy; because each of us has sensed by now, in his own flesh, the tiresomeness, the fatigue, of existing. Yet this chapter, too, has its difficulties. Because certain things are impalpable and can be expressed only with a smile, or with a caress.

I have three children. Sometimes my wife and I are at a loss as to how to educate them. These youngsters are open-minded, anxious to learn and to experiment. Yet they are saddled with the problems of a world that is coming to an end, that has failed in a certain way: a world in which values are changing.

The questions they ask us are often embarrassing, for they could be answered in different ways.

My wife and I would like to do all we can to make sure that nothing bad should happen to these children, that life should not wound them as it wounds everybody. We would like to bring them up in such a way that their experience of life is real, not theoretical, without exposing them to the kind of beating life has in store for all of us.

This is a difficult problem, more or less familiar to everybody. Even to those parents who cling to old-fashioned systems of education, with their precise rules. Because the children no longer believe in such rules.

I have taken this question of educating my children as a pretext to explain a certain number of human errors.

At this moment of writing I am a long distance from home. Far away, almost at the antipodes from where I am, on a hill above Florence there is a house I built. There my children live, with my wife.

I am talking with them. My wife is happy when this occurs and pretends to be knitting. I say, she pretends, because for months now I have been seeing this same color of wool. My older daughter is drawing a kicking colt. The younger one is playing with the cat. The youngest child, who should be the strong man of the house, is still a puppy, rubbing himself against his mother.

Thus we are all together, and I tell them:

Children, tonight I am going to talk to you about abstract man as the source of errors. So be good now and listen to my story.

Once upon a time there was the earth. An earth that could not think yet, sunk as it was in the bog of instinct. Because this earth had not yet given birth to man.

Then, as time went on, man was born, and the earth began to think. And it thought more and more. Thus a new adventure began. Because not to think, not to use this marvelous tool, means, after all, to remain within the earth's circuit. Instinct does not pierce the atmosphere to pass beyond. It does not reach the stars. Animals, too, look at the stars, and dogs bay at the moon; they see, but I don't think they can detach the earth from the stars and the moon. I don't know. But when I feel somewhat like a dog that bays at the moon, I see the moon behind the cypress tree; I see it as far away as the cypress tree, not more, or perhaps just a little bit farther off. When, instead, I feel human, I see the moon as remote, even though it is perhaps closer to me than the cypress tree because I can reach it with my thought. But while "instinct never goes wrong," as the popular saying has it, thought can and does go wrong. Thought may hit reality or miss it; it may be tuned right to the universe or it may be off-key and imagine anything at all—even a woman with an elephant's head and the belly of a turtle.

If thought is able to do that, my dear children, this means that we human beings often live in a world of imaginary, not of real things. Thus it may happen that we walk through the fields and find a flower, that we pluck it, out of atavistic habit, but are unable to realize the flower. And when a man gets to the point of making flowers out of colored plastic, always fresh and beautiful, to adorn his house, that means that this detachment is now complete and total.

Just one more little step and we'll be making a woman out of plastic, a woman with a sweet plastic smile and sweet plastic caresses, who will even give us scientifically selected and controlled children.

This means that man has become abstract. Instead of using his power of abstraction—which is quite another thing—he himself has become abstract, always more abstract, to the point of no longer seeing the flower, no longer seeing the clouds in the sky, whose beauty he perceives only when he sees them reproduced on a movie screen.

It's not man's fault, though; and it's not the earth's fault. It's nobody's fault. It just happened.

But then something else happened: whenever man, ejected from the safe realm of instinct into the apparent freedom of the apparently boundless realm of thought, found himself face-to-face with an object, whether a stone or a flower or an animal, he realized that he had lost his natural rule of life, and thus he had to give himself a new rule, any rule whatever, just to be able to survive.

And so it happened, my dear children, that a continuous line of personages appeared on this earth, personages who represented, each in a given historical period, the best that the earth had to offer itself.

These personages, men and women, became the archetypes of human perfection, models to be imitated.

They became the rule.

How many marvelous figures the earth has brought forth!

Heroes, saints, prophets!

If we could assemble them all, on a moonlit night, in the middle of a great forest, in a round glade opened up by human labor, if then we could hide behind the trees and watch them, we could spend a splendid night of our existence in observing these personages, each of whom has embodied, up to his death, an effort to justify his existence in order to live. You see, children, some of these personages, these heroes, you have heard about at school. About others, in life. About still others you are going to hear in the future.

And the chain will lengthen. It will lengthen, and when you have known all of them, really known them through and through, then it will seem to you as though you held in your hands the keys to human history, so that nothing will remain obscure. Because we could say that through these men and women the earth has moved forward, has evolved.

But we could say also the contrary; which would be just as true.

We could say that these personages are the result of the toil of everybody.

I could tell you stories about so many of these heroes. I used to love them so deeply that I would search for them, stalk them as if stalking a prey, go hunting for them. I have known them. With some of them I have tried to identify myself.

Sometimes I have been a saint. Or a prophet. Or a sorcerer. Or an emperor. At other times . . . at other times . . .

I know Sisypheus as well as Orpheus, Tantalus as well as Antheus. I know Buddha as well as Christ. I know Socrates and Leonardo da Vinci. Just as I know Joan of Arc.

White, black, yellow, red, and blue, and all the colors in between. Because I too had to learn how to live.

My wife still has her knitting in her hands. This Penelope's web has grown a few rows. At night, perhaps, it unravels itself.

The cat has gone. The sun has gone into hiding, bored perhaps, by my story.

The kids look at me.

There, now, children. Now my story has come to a fork, and could take either of two roads. One would be more historical, the other more analytical. That is, I could take some of these personages, and try to see their virtues and defects. To see the border line between abstraction and reality. But this road is dangerous. Because perhaps you love some of these personages, and you would suffer at seeing them belittled, seeing them no longer in that moon-lit forest glade, but in quite different situations of life: one, maybe, brushing his teeth; the other, going to the toilet; a third one, holding his aching tummy.

Therefore I've decided to follow the other road.

I shan't speak about personages. I'll speak about animals. Instead of the noble knight, about a lion, perhaps; instead of the saint, about a butterfly.

It will be less personal, but easier to understand.

So there: here we have a lion-man, an eagle-man, a horse-man, or a cat- or frog- or sometimes even a snake-man.

Each one, the lion-man or cat- or frogman, has had his turn as king of mankind, or, more precisely, as its archetype, its symbol of perfection.

Let's assume we live at the time of the horse-man. What happens? A little creature is born. It is born as a squirrel. The parents are deeply worried right away. What can we do with this offspring? What can a squirrel-man do in a world of horse-men? There is only one solution: we must teach him to be as much as possible a horse-man, up to the point of identification.

Thus the life of this new being begins.

While the colt-children are romping in the meadows, the poor squirrel-child would like to climb trees. That is his world. That is his truth. But what would people say of a colt that tried to climb trees?

So the poor thing is forced to kick, walk, trot, and can-



ter. This way of moving is so unnatural to him that at night, when he goes to bed, he begins to cry. All his life. All wrong. Until this failure of a horse, dying, glimpses his mirrored image in a river and discovers that he is really a squirrel. A squirrel that never existed!

That is the end of the story. But within this story, there are, to some extent, all the stories of all men, none excluded. Even the most beautiful of lives was not a genuinely real life, was a life expended in the attempt to identify with the hero of that particular time. And in this sense, a failure, because it was spent without the possibility of ever being what it was not.

Now that the story is finished, I look at my children. What a sad story! Their faces look bewildered. I feel embarrassed. What have I done, after all? I have bereft them, at least with words—life fortunately is stronger than all these things—of any possibility of imitation, any possibility of rising through a “hero”; I have really taken away from them any mythical possibility of existing.

But what should I do? Cheat them? I go on.

What remains to us, what really remains in our hands, of this failure of a world? What remains to us in the endless night, in a world in which men are being humiliated, injured, frustrated, without the possibility of resisting? What remains to us in this desert made of houses and trees and flowers and animals and human beings?

To hurl. To hurl all illusions headlong into the abyss.

To uproot. To uproot from the earth all false hopes.

This is what I see. I see the world as if at war, after a night of carnage, and such is the horror and fear and cowardly concern for one's own skin that nothing any longer impresses the hearts of the survivors: not the screams from the torn and dying bodies, not the crying of orphaned children, unable to recognize even the faces of their dead parents. The exhaustion is such that nothing impresses any more. The night has been long and the day

is dawning. The screams—who knows why—are stopping now. At dawn dying people die; and the children are asleep on the ruins. Almost everybody is sleeping. The weight of fear has been such that there is not a man whose shoulders do not sag. Even those who roam through the night trying to help, walk with bent backs, not seeing the sky, their eyes buried in the holes that have been torn in the earth.

These are the things I have seen and lived through. During the last war. But I could visualize the others: those whose communiqués said, "In one night we have destroyed the city of . . ." And they thought this was grounds for quite some satisfaction. But in the vision that I am having now, there is not even the hopefulness of the other side, because in this vision it is as if the whole earth had lived through a night of carnage. All mankind together at the dawn that rings the earth with new light—a snake biting its tail—and the light sees all of us together, stooping, eyes buried in the holes in the torn earth.

This is dawn; but scarcely has the golden apple of the sun floated up than something happens.

I get up to count my soldiers. Just a few yards away a child starts sobbing again. A woman walks toward the child. Someone digs up some bread from under the ruins. The dead are buried in the mortar holes. The living are counted. A few are busy already patching up the houses so as not to have to sleep another night in the shelter. The blood is stirring and life resumes its course.

There are even people tuning up in a timid song so as to take heart again.

True, there is also an occasional jackal scavenging among the ruins. But what do you expect? Even my orderly, one of my soldiers to whom I have given the strictest orders not to steal, came one morning bringing me two pairs of still cellophane-wrapped black silk socks for my wretched feet, sockless and so swollen that I had had to cut a couple of slashes in the boots. He handed me those socks with a dead-pan smile. What was there to do?

Just smile back, clap him on the shoulder, take off my boots, and put on both pairs of socks, one on top of the other. The following night, in the tool niches of the train tunnel, there were couples making love again.

Within a few hours, a new city was born. A natural city, more truthful and better than the one in which we are living now.

I assure you, children, it was an extraordinary experience. All of a sudden men had again become what they really were. Without myths, without heroes. Simply men who tried to live once more, together, after the carnage.

You see what I mean, children? This is life. This is the only possible starting point. These simple acts of existing that occur, spontaneous and true, without imitation, where each one simply tries to be what he is.

There are no more lion-men and frog-men. Nor squirrel-nor horse-men.

There are only horses and horses. Frogs and frogs. Lions and lions. Squirrels and squirrels. And, at last, men and men. True life can begin on earth, at last.

The story is ended. I could just as well stop, because every tale contains within itself its own conclusion, its so-called moral.

But I am too fond of you. You must not be left in ambiguity. True, often it is just in the ambiguous that truth exists, but these days people fool around too much with the ambiguous. And you are still too young, too close to the fable of Phaedrus you recently studied, to grasp truth within the ambiguous.

This is why I want to explain my fable and its moral. The moral could be summarized thus: To live well on this earth, each one must be enabled freely to develop his own possibility of existing. Full stop.

But this statement contains within itself something more tangible. And this more tangible thing I want to expose to the light.

In the previous chapter on "the subjective and the ob-

jective," we had reached a conclusion which for me is basic. This conclusion was that nothing solid for the future can be built on a subjective position, except at the price of anarchy, or on an objective position, save at the price of dictatorship, inasmuch as the subjective and the objective are merely aspects or, better, moments, of the same reality.

In a way the conclusion of that chapter is that human life has only a relational value. It is a relationship. Arbitrary subjective opinion does not count, nor does the demagogic rule of the collectivity.

Perhaps it would have been logical to run the present chapter on another equally dualistic track: that of the One and the Many.

I have chosen instead to speak of abstract man in order to come to the same conclusion. Merely in order to avoid useless polemics, mental blocks, and a hardening of the positions. It is easier to understand, and to make others understand, that our life has no meaning unless we live it the way we are, not the way we wish to be or others wish us to be. But once we have arrived at an existential world—or, if you prefer, at a relational world—once we have brought ourselves to the point of admitting that the relation must be spontaneous and not coerced by rules, it becomes inevitable that we speak of society, that is, of the group of human beings who must live together, until today coerced by rules, but henceforth free of them.

And here the matter becomes thorny. Not as if it were a difficult argument in itself. On the contrary. At the point we have reached by now, it should appear perfectly clear, self-evident, and natural. Difficult only insofar as this kind of reasoning may hurt the susceptibility of those unable or unwilling to accept my conclusions, no matter whether they be statesmen or economists or even people not specialized in these fields but who simply produce something: corn, cars, buildings, or whatever.

So, my dear children, I'd rather speak of myself again. Not because I think I am exemplary, but simply because I carry my own weight and my own responsibility.

It seems to me that, unless I make the mistake of falling back on obsolete and inadequate historical attitudes, I find myself in neither a subjective nor an objective position. That is, I try neither to have a personal opinion to impose on others, nor to accept rules imposed from outside unless I am intellectually convinced that they emanate from a true common basis. I said I try. To put it in terms of a social context—that is, speaking of myself as a man related to other men—I try to be neither the hero to be imitated, nor an imitator of the hero: not even the collective hero, the collective man, who assumes the guise of the hero.

It may be true that the worship of a collective hero is a historical step forward from the worship of the individual hero; but the error remains the same; perhaps the collective hero is even more dangerous inasmuch as he is less easily identifiable, playing hide-and-seek, as he does, in the crowds.

But then, to what degree does my sociability exist? Am I or am I not a so-called social being?

I'll try to explain what I mean. Soon enough this is going to happen to you too, children. In fact it has already happened, or is happening now. It has been happening since the day you were born, and you were hungry and thirsty and interrupted the sleep, and tried the patience, of your parents; in other words, you have established a relationship between yourselves and them, even if, at that time, you did so involuntarily. But let's go on.

Am I a social being?

If I listen to the others, and to what they say or write about me, I feel that I am caught between two fires. If I may generalize, I'll say that those who are politically and socially leftists consider me a romantic individualist with semi-anarchist, asocial leanings; the rightists or the moderates, on the other hand, take me for a dangerous, half-crazy, revolutionary. But the truth seems to me to be something else again. Two antiquated concepts of what is "social" are rampant in the world today: on the one side, the liberal concept that sets up the individual hero; on the

other, the communist concept that sets up the collective hero. But these concepts are both contained within a social diagram that seems to me obsolete. Save for some rare and exceptional persons, the world has not yet produced a new concept of the body social in which everyone is an integral part of a living organism within which he can freely act and express himself in function with the others. In relation to the others. This, my dear children, is one of the aspects, perhaps the main aspect, of the crisis of modern men, not only as individuals but as a collectivity. This analysis might lead me to say my say about the various nations and their different ways of conceiving society. But I try to see things from my own point of view, which is that of an architect and painter. I leave it to the politicians and sociologists to examine the same phenomenon from their own points of view.

So let's take architecture and painting.

If what I have said is true, this means that the cities, the buildings, the paintings of a time reflect a state of things which for us today is no longer adequate.

First of all, one thing should be noted. If we look today at an old work of art, we feel somehow that there is something about it that doesn't work any more, that is alien to us, that does not interest us any longer, does not belong to us. We may say that the work of art is beautiful, stupendous, even sublime; but there is something about it that is irreparably lost to us.

I don't know exactly how you feel about that, children.

Perhaps the spell of the "masterpiece" still weighs on you and influences your judgment.

But for me everything has changed. I am fed up with masterpieces. I am no longer intimidated by them. Today, when I walk through a city, when I look at a painting in a museum or a fresco in a church, when I am facing a temple or a palace, I don't feel at ease. These are not cities, paintings, and architecture for us. They are beautiful, I agree. I admire them more every time. But I don't love them, I can't love them, any longer.

There is always something that disturbs me, displeases me. Whenever I can, I try to see a thing under the best possible conditions: the cities, at night, when modern traffic does not falsify the feel of them; the churches, when they are empty, to be able really to see their frescoes or mosaics. But it's useless.

All these forms, all these images, have their point of departure in something that is no longer real for me. I can't get around that. This church here is a house built for God, this palace is the house of a prince; this painting is of the Madonna. Everything is created for a hero, not for man.

Sometimes I find more beauty and, above all, more truth, in the house of a peasant, or in a bridge, or in a decorative painting. There is less thought in it, I agree, less intuition, I agree, less of anything you want, but there is more freedom: these things are made for men, for us, for our everyday life. And if someone asks me, "Do you know modern cities, modern architecture, modern paintings, and so on, that are more beautiful than those of antiquity?" what should I answer? It is easy to answer, after all. No, dear fellow, I don't, I have to say. In a certain sense modern men have not yet achieved this greatness, this nobility. But this is just because what is called "modern man" is in reality still an ancient man, a man belonging to the past. Almost all men still work within the myth; they still search for a hero. And since today's heroes, in comparison to the ancient ones, are petty middle-class heroes, it is logical that it should be much harder for modern man to achieve a masterpiece.

Once upon a time there were eagle churches, horse palaces, and bird-of-paradise paintings. Today, in this mechanical era in which everything is made for comfort, they can only make pig constructions, hen houses, and canary paintings—save for a few exceptions that merely confirm the rule. But all this belongs to the past, to the end of the past. If by "modern," by this ambiguous word which, after all, means nothing, we want to indicate

something that is outside the myth, beyond the hero, but within life as real existing relationships among men, then I must say that everything still remains to be done; because even those who have understood the problem have not yet had the possibility of genuinely expressing themselves, since they are constrained by a society which does not yet permit the creation of something really new.

Every innovation needs time, for that matter. Nothing changes all of a sudden. But when it is possible for the men called architects, painters, and sculptors really to express the whole life of man, then you may be sure that the objects which these men will make will have nothing to fear from a comparison with the works of the past. On the contrary, they will gain from it. When I say this, I am not a prophet or a visionary. I am logical, that is all.

When men have finally succeeded in being more truthful and more real, when they have dropped their personal ambitions and work as integrated parts of cosmic life, it is logical that their works will be more beautiful—if you still want to use this equivocal term—more beautiful because more real than the objects of the past. Not only that, but at the same time they will contain all the values of the ancient heroes, because all those heroes, including the gods, who were projected outside himself by man, are really contained within man; for it is impossible for man to give anything of himself that does not belong to him.

So we must get rid of our inferiority complex; we must look toward our future with hope and confidence. If the people of antiquity were able to create those stupendous things for the “others,” then we shall certainly be able to create even more beautiful things for ourselves, as free men, at no one’s command, in such a way that we shall no longer be abstract men, but real. All of us finally shall be Anonymous (20th Century).

That’s the way it is, my dear children. And therefore you must be full of hope. This splendid future is within reach, within reach of your hands, this true civilization of Anonymous (20th Century).



# 5

## Farewell, Masters; Farewell, Geniuses

It is not easy to write against those who have brought you up, who have taught you. To write against those you have loved, esteemed, admired. Against those who, after all, have made this earth what it is, especially during these last hundred years.

It is difficult to find the right tone, the right angle, the right measure. To "write against" is the wrong expression, anyway; because he who tries to be anonymous cannot write against anybody, least of all against those who are the most vital, the most authentic, the most important men of our time.

In a moment of uneasiness or of anger someone might scream, "They have fouled things up for us, these geniuses! We are fed up with great masters!"

In a moment of terror: "Death to the geniuses!"

In a moment of gentle acceptance of our human limits: "Who are the geniuses?"

And this can be said in so many ways: proudly, humbly, wickedly, or kindly. Depending on the state of mind.

But the only thing that matters, quite apart from the way you say it, is to explain why those masters and geniuses are no longer useful, no longer necessary, but are, on the contrary, harmful to our future, to any new possibility of life among men.

To say farewell to genius means, to some extent at least, to say farewell to ourselves, to our own youth. For

if we say we no longer believe in genius, this does not mean only the genius of the past. It means also that we no longer believe in the possibility of our being geniuses ourselves.

And if we say we no longer believe in our masters, it is tantamount to saying that we no longer believe in our fathers—which means that we remain lonely and orphaned.

You might ask: What's all this uproar against geniuses, if it was you yourself, when young, who wanted them, who imposed them on us, who made us believe in them? And this is really quite an embarrassing question. Because it contains a substantial amount of truth. How can we answer, we who try to be Anonymous (20th Century)?

The answer must be truthful, simple. That is the only possibility. We owe to the man in the street this bitter admission: You are right. We were wrong. And now we owe you an explanation of the reasons for our error.

I personally know the reasons for my error.

I believed in the geniuses because the earth was tired. And the earth all seemed ugly and I felt that it could be beautiful. Because I saw that life was evil and I felt it could be good. Because I felt ill at ease among men. When a young man is in this situation, he just cannot help looking for someone to blame and for someone in whose hands to put the possibility of salvation: for the scapegoat and the savior. That is the way it is.

Who should he blame for the stupidity of this world?

Who but the stupid?

This is inevitable, and logical.

On one side, a flat world, obtuse, without ambitions, a monotonous, bored, tired world; on the other side, the possibility of a new world, full of life and hope, an exalting, adventurous world.

The choice was obvious. It was automatic.

I chose genius.

But after that things changed. For me they changed especially during the war.

And other questions arose.

Where were the geniuses during a war?

Were they able to raise their sovereign heads in a night of horror above the rotting bodies of men, over forlorn and lonely children?

Were they able to stand the comparison, when not even the cross of Christ who died for man made sense any longer, up there on the hill, rising above us who were dying without sense or reason?

Sure, sure, geniuses: go back home, go home after a night of slaughter. Take your tools and work; go ahead and make your personal masterpiece.

Not even Cimabue, in such a night of slaughter, would have been able to make a studio painting of a crucifixion.

You may say that all wars are the same: that the invasions of the barbarians were much more ferocious than the last war, and that their means of destruction were more ferocious than the atom bomb of Hiroshima. And you are right.

But those were holy wars. Or at least they involved some ideals. People fought to assert the right to life of the stronger; or they fought in defense of civilization.

But the last one was a war without any sense—at least for an intelligent Italian. For what and for whom was I fighting? What justification could I find in a battle against an enemy whom I should have killed but was unable to kill?

It is useless.

You may kill the infidel to defend your God.

You may kill the barbarian who destroys your houses and carries your women off into slavery.

You may kill an enemy in order to despoil him and save your own children from starvation. You may even kill out of patriotism.

But you can't kill when you don't know who the fellow is there in front of you; when you don't know why he was born nor why he should die; when you can't promise him a beyond or even the end of everything; when mystery is the only sovereign law; when you don't know whether in kill-

ing a person you kill his possibility of fulfilling his own existence for better or for worse.

If to live means merely to transform oneself from one thing into another, or better, to pass from one state into another, can you stop anyone from accomplishing this transformation, this transmutation?

It is not a question of cruelty or kindness.

Not a question of ethics or non-ethics.

It is a question of not-knowing. A man today simply cannot commit an action as total as that of killing without knowing what it may mean.

I cannot kill, simply for one reason: because I am not sure what life is.

All those who believe in myths are able to kill. But Anonymous (20th Century) cannot kill.

But, then, what have geniuses to do with war?

This is the crux of the problem.

I have talked about war, for that matter, perhaps because the suffering I went through has left me with a complex that I can't get rid of. To me the confrontation of the corpse and the genius seems so real and evident that I don't think anything else has to be added.

But if you want me to, I can tell you in still other ways who is basically a genius.

A genius is someone who asserts an opinion. No matter how great he is, what he stands for is always a personal and subjective opinion. The trouble is that, because of the high position from which this opinion is uttered, this voice wants to become objective.

The genius is, after all, a dictator.

Even if he dictates only ideas.

Someone might object that my definition of genius is wrong, that there are other definitions.

A genius is a recipient of grace.

A genius is an interpreter of history.

A genius is an objectivizer of the collective unconscious of a people.

A genius expands the subjective into the universal until it becomes objective.

But the problem does not change. Because, in the last analysis, the problem is always this: either the genius is a superman, that is, not a man but something else, or the genius is a man like others.

If the genius is a superman, not a man, but something else, he does not interest me; just as the angels do not interest me, because I do not know them. Or, if he is a man like all the others, it is about time to stop all this rhetoric about genius.

The genius is a man who eats, sleeps, makes love, and urinates just like the rest of us.

Not only that; but without the others he dies. Without the peasant who sows the corn, he would die of hunger; without the miner who digs the coal, he would die of cold; without the shoemaker he would have to walk barefoot.

The genius does not exist. It is only that some men have certain qualities, and others have other qualities.

It is a question of redimensioning things, of setting them within their proper limits, of giving them their correct importance.

A future civilization, the civilization of Anonymous (20th Century), will be a civilization without heroes, without geniuses, without paladins, without gallery-gods. It will be a simple civilization, made by men who work together with their different qualities. The fruit of this work must be the fruit of all. Ours will be a world of real actions, not of personal ideas.

Our vision of the world is the synthesis of all men's visions of the world.

It is not a vision imposed by some on others. And I said synthesis. I did not say average. Because a world of averages would be a mediocre world; it would be inadequate for the many who are below, and the few who are above, that average. It would be inadequate for everybody, because even the mediocre would not feel well in a mediocre world.

It is just the mediocre people, for that matter, who need geniuses to survive; it is they who worship these supernatural figures, who for them are symbol and screen. Symbol, when things go well: "You see, he represents us, we are he." Screen, when things go badly: "Not everybody is alike. Everyone commits errors. We are no geniuses." Yes, it is true. We all may commit errors. Or nobody does. What matters is to know what is the error. Because there are errors which amount to stealing, murdering, enslaving: in other words, to taking away from others the possibility of existing. And there are errors which amount to going wrong in the other direction: an inability to give others the maximum possibility of existing.

These mediocre people may look around today, and, thank goodness, they will no longer find—especially among the younger generation (I mean the people between thirty-five and fifty today)—many so-called geniuses, with their heads sticking out above the others, *hors de la mêlée*. And so they ask: "What is happening today? How come that no more geniuses are being born?" As if we were idiots, weaklings, cowards. Instead, we are simply people who try to pay, at last, with our own hides.

Nothing can be done about it. Dear geniuses and masters, we have loved you, respected you, studied you, analyzed you. We are thankful to you for what you have taught us. But now there has been a break between us and you. A break which we hope will never more be bridged. We hope, in other words, that history will not turn back, in a process of involution. We know you well. We know everything about you, we know your virtues and your defects. You have been neither good nor bad. You have lived, and if you have lived, this means that this was necessary, and that you have a historical validity. But your attitude does not interest us any longer.

We want a world made from the periphery, not from the center. We want a world made by osmosis among all men, not a world made by the imposition of ideas. We want a world in which all men feel at their ease:

the intelligent and the stupid, the ugly and the handsome, the good and the bad. Because in reality everybody is at the same time intelligent and stupid, ugly and handsome, good and bad. There is not so much difference between the first and the last of human beings (assuming, for the moment, that there is such a thing as the first and the last of human beings), compared to the immense distance that separates the human dimension from the other dimensions that are being discovered as time goes by—and who knows how many more dimensions will still have to be discovered before the whole universe acquires full consciousness of itself. We no longer have any use for this arrogant, self-secure, self-sufficient air of the genius! Keep all your masterpieces for yourself! We want to begin from the beginning.

Now I have fired off my ammunition against the geniuses, and this was necessary. But it is also necessary to take a closer look at these geniuses. We must prove the erroneousness of their attitude. We must sink our teeth down to the marrow of their error, and not let our prey escape. We must keep our eyes wide open and watch out, or else they might easily counterattack.

Let us take three recent geniuses in the field of architecture, and three in the field of painting. Without offense to the others, I hope. But, in order to exemplify, we must set ourselves limits.

Wright, Mies van der Rohe, Le Corbusier, Picasso, Matisse, Klee.

Of these six, Wright is perhaps the one most deserving the name genius by antonomasia.

American by birth, remote from the living center of world culture (which at that time was Europe), he represents a real force of unfettered nature that succeeds, from an inner impulse, in breaking with a traditional architecture derived from old European models, and in creating an autochthonous, new and, so to speak, virgin architecture, even if under closer scrutiny this architec-

ture too reveals its roots. Now he is dead. I had the good fortune of knowing him. He was what you call a marvelous man. He had an incredible charm. He was sure of himself, elegant. I remember him, for instance, roaming the streets of Florence one night, wrapped in a splendid coat, as though he were an inhabitant of another planet. Such was his civility, even if he did not belong to our civilization.

To me he represented all that is best in the States. He was the prototype of the pioneer, the finest fruit of that America which I love and which, I expect, will choose its own destiny, even if today that destiny is not yet clear.

For this is what America represents to me: a people of failures who have remade their lives. I say this with the greatest admiration. Because I believe that only the man who has failed individually can become Anonymous (20th Century). The civilization of the future is being born from this state of failure, from this zero point, from which you either rise at last, free and ready, or die. Well, is there another people, born from failure like the American people, consisting as it does of individuals who had to flee from Europe for no matter what reason?

This collective failure is intrinsic in the American people. A failure of which they need not be conscious but which acts on them. Hence the pioneers. It is logical that the first thing to do, after the failure, is to try to survive; to look for the material means for survival; hence the mechanical civilization of comfort we know in America, aiming at nothing but the highest possible standard of living. Today America finds itself at a crossroads: either the Americans will again become pioneers, searching for the savor of existence; or they too will be engulfed, they will destroy themselves, and shall have nothing to say any longer. But Wright was the first example of pioneering in the field of the spirit—an expression which, to my ear, is equivocal, but still perfectly befits the figure that he was.

Wright was a frontiersman of the spirit, ever ready to discover new lands, to plow them and to sow—with his gun ever within reach, against possible bandits and usurpers.



Sometimes this gun, loaded with outbursts of maxims, could get on our cross old European nerves, but it also indicated the presence of a real force and, above all, Wright's confidence in himself and in man.

Now that he is dead, we can examine with colder hearts all that he has left us. An enormous inheritance in the face of which we must make our choices and use our judgment.

Wright was a romantic. He was unable to exercise self-criticism or self-control. Of the things he made, four fifths must be repudiated, but the one fifth that remains conveys teachings of a profound importance. Faced with the works of Wright I have been full of admiration, of disgust; I have been irritated and exalted. In the case of the Kaufman House, Falling Water, when you have swallowed that lump in your throat and disregarded certain elements which today can no longer interest us, certain facts remain: incomparable fantasy, the destruction of the closed Renaissance form, the invention of a new space, the principle of a continuous dynamism, the creation of new relationships among the materials.

In front of the Johnson Wax Building in Racine—once you have overcome your astonishment at sometimes incredibly bad taste, and at the uncontrolled and gratuitous way of forcing various materials to an unnatural use—the wonder at a new conception of the city overwhelms you. The last projects, which were never carried out, like the one over the Bay at San Francisco or the Lake Building in Madison, Wisconsin, convey, apart from certain formal solutions, a new geographic feeling of architecture.

Taken all together, Wright's contribution is enormous. But what I should like to point out here is that aspect of it that no longer makes any sense today.

I'll take an example that elucidates most clearly his error in posing the problem: the Guggenheim Museum.

Let us leave aside the form, for a moment; let us leave aside beauty, and the important things which, in spite of everything, the Guggenheim Museum conveys to us.

Let us merely look at Wright's attitude toward others, at the way he faces existence.

The problem was to create a museum of modern art, for an existing collection, facing Central Park at the corner of 89th Street and Fifth Avenue, in New York City.

The place, the client, the function, are all clear.

What does Wright do?

Point one: he does not bother about the place. It could be in the desert or at the North Pole, on a plain or on a mountain, in one climate or in another. His idea is fixed in his mind: a free space within a spiral.

Thus this "form" is born. In front there are trees and three hundred twenty-five yards of free space; on the one side, a narrow street; on the other the building is oppressed by an adjacent higher building; in the rear it is almost growing into another building that has no character at all.

But Wright ignores the place; which means, he ignores the city, the inhabitants, their true needs.

Point two: he does not care about the function of the building. Wright does not like modern painting. So why should he bother? Museum or no museum, paintings or no paintings, this is a great occasion for him: a free space within a spiral. And yet, those paintings have been painted by great painters, whose genius, in a number of cases, has been confirmed by history. There are Picassos among them, Kandinskys, Chagalls, Modiglianis. People who paid with their own hides. Some paid with a life of misery and a tragic death, suffered in the service of art. People of this magnitude, his equals at least, might have been respected.

But Wright is indifferent to the paintings as well as those who painted them. He doesn't give a damn about the light they need, about the space and the dimensions they require; and it is all the same to him how they will be exhibited and how they will be hung. That's up to the director of the gallery. Thus he forgets about the function of the building: the reason why a thing is born.

Point three: he doesn't give a hoot about the client.

He forgets about the visitors to the museum who will come to see the paintings. Distracted by the void at their backs, they won't be able to look at the paintings the way they should; but that does not matter. It does not matter that they are going to have stiff necks because of the slanting pavements; it does not matter that the place lacks the intimacy you want for looking at a painting; that the setting does not encourage the colloquy between artist and spectator. It does not matter, for almost all the other museums are even worse, with their Doric and Corinthian columns and their red plush walls. It is certain, anyway, that people will stand in line and pay for their tickets in order to see the museum rather than the paintings.

So Wright forgets about the client: the person who is going to visit the building. And he forgets about a number of other things.

You leave the museum in a state of bewilderment. Apart from whether or not you are impressed by the beauty of the building, what strikes you is the attitude behind its conception. Does this attitude represent the kind of civilization we want for the future?

And yet Wright is the architect whom in certain respects I love most. I hope the reader will forgive my brusque way of writing these pages. It may be offensive, irritating, I know. But that Anonymous (20th Century) presses on our hearts and revolts against a state of things that must come to an end, if we want a simple, new life in peace.

Mies van der Rohe.

In a certain sense he is at the opposite pole from Wright. Where the latter is all fantasy, heart, invention, the former represents intelligence, method, calculation. If I have loved Wright, Mies van der Rohe I could merely admire. His search is of quite another nature. Instead of diving into the adventure of the great masterpiece, Mies would seem to strive for a mass-production architecture: clean, economical.

Instead of difficult, acrobatic structures, at exceptional labor cost, we have here elementary structures, made of pieces which industry furnishes in mass production; instead of newly invented forms, he designs forms that can be derived logically from those called by some critics the structural carrying cage. Beauty does not rise from spatial and formal invention as much as from the total mass and from the detail. In certain aspects this type of architecture seems to respond, to a higher degree, to a social function. Even more than that: by searching for a new method, it seems to afford a more important contribution to that anonymous architecture, that anonymous civilization of the 20th Century to which I feel bound to pledge my efforts.

A detailed and critical examination of the works of Mies van der Rohe would bring many surprises. Instead of a classicist, as he has been defined by many, he might turn out a romantic. His symbolic way of writing would show him to be such; so would his drawings, which are almost expressionistic; so is his way of posing certain specific problems of architecture: how he lets a piece of architecture be born from the earth and how he brings it to its conclusion. Perhaps we should discover that the so-called purity of the structural cage and of the detail is, after all, not so pure.

In fact, the structure, in general, is hidden, inasmuch as the fire security regulations prescribe that the steel beams must be sunk into cement or be masked with non-combustible materials. It would be more exact to speak of a self-supporting façade than of a structural cage. And from an architectural point of view this is much less important, perhaps it is even harmful: on one and the same structure any type of façade could be grafted. I believe, moreover, that to speak of façades reveals a still neo-classical attitude toward architecture.

One might say that Mies van der Rohe's greatest contribution to architecture has been the German Pavilion in Barcelona, which constitutes an attempt to create a new

architectonic space—much more so than his more famous skyscrapers, in which the typology is antiquated. They are not much different from other skyscrapers and normal many-stories houses that have a central staircase around which the apartments are laid out.

But the topic of this chapter is not a critical dissection of the positive and negative aspects of certain architects—in this case, of a gigantic and taciturn one. What we proposed to do was to examine an attitude. As in the case of Wright, we shall therefore omit any general examination and concentrate instead on one building in order to try to individuate the designer's attitude.

Let us take the Seagram Building, Mies van de Rohe's most conspicuous and most famous work. The problem was: to create a skyscraper for office use in the most central area of New York, on Park Avenue. Mies van der Rohe arrives and hurls his challenge. For a long time he had been dreaming of such a skyscraper! Those he built in Chicago were different, straitjacketed as he then was by the exigencies of apartments that had to be sold or rented. But now the grand occasion has come. "Steel and glass. The future of architecture."

Point one: Mies wants a plaza. Space is terribly expensive on Park Avenue. But it is worth it, and he gets the plaza. In this canyon of skyscrapers, what a blessing a plaza is! But a plaza must have a meaning. It's something to live in, somewhere to feel at ease. Something cordial.

Here instead the plaza has a quite different function. It is purely monumental and decorative. Embellished by fountains, it serves only to put the monument in better evidence. To create a better perspective for this monolith; for this is what the building appears to be, even though it is all of glass: a building without internal space. Even the ground floor has only a monumental function, and the restaurant and the café, which might have given real life to the plaza, must be searched for. They are at the side of the building, sophisticated and closed in. Now this is New York; and open space, apart from Central Park, is some-

thing almost totally unknown to people. To take, in this situation, a plaza and make of it a monument rather than using it urbanistically to enrich the lives of people, seems to me something inconceivable.

The lives of people. Completely disregarded. As in every skyscraper, the elevator man spends his life going up and down as though within the dark earth. From the offices, where you might enjoy the sight of a stupendous panorama, you cannot look out at all. In order to give the aesthetic effect of a warm light from the outside rather than a cold one, the color of the glass is such that its reflection prevents your sight from passing beyond the windows. The remedies that have been tried have failed to improve the situation. Employees seated at a certain distance from the windows have no feeling of living at all. It is as if the internal space simply did not exist. The different conditions that should have determined different ways of insulating toward north, south, east, and west, were not taken into account. One of the glass walls never sees the sun. The other is roasted by it. You cannot open any window. You are living in an air-conditioned glass test-tube.

The exterior is all decorative. Mies chose to have the I-beams especially cast in bronze rather than to use the standard iron ones—as would have been in keeping with his own principles. There is not one mass-produced piece. Everything—industrialization, economy, human life—is conditioned by a certain *a priori* ideal of beauty.

Suppose the general taste changes tomorrow: you might change the whole façade, and nothing would remain of the original building—not even the memory.

But what concerned Mies was the monument—the most beautiful skyscraper in New York. All the rest was sacrificed to this idol. And so this skyscraper was born. A masterpiece!

I step out of the building, dumfounded, turning my eyes once more toward it. And to me it is an evil, cruel, and overpowering thing.

The same day, in the same city, through the Guggenheim Museum and the Seagram Building, built during the same period, we have seen two opinions.

Two sublime opinions. But where is the truth?

Le Corbusier.

The case of Le Courbusier may appear different. This splendid, exemplary European (Latin, I almost said, so humanistic does his cultural formation seem, so rich and so profound are his interests, in the field of the plastic arts) might appear, at last, to be a synthesis of our time. No longer an opinion, but the truth. When I met him for the first time in his studio in Paris, I really believed, and hoped, that he was right.

This tall thin-faced man seemed to possess, behind his big glasses, the clairvoyance necessary in a time as problematic as ours; behind his forehead, the wisdom necessary in a time so turbulent. I was really moved.

During those years the "Unité d'habitation" was being created at Marseilles. Faced with the plans and sketches, which he illustrated with a voice that was both enthusiastic and calm, I expected from this housing project a positive answer to the problem of our living. Everything was comprised in that building. Nothing was overlooked. The city existed. The space existed. The structure existed. The material existed. Even the problems of integrating architecture with sculpture and painting.

With my heart in my throat I was awaiting the miracle, even though the war was over, and I no longer believed in myths. Not even in that of Le Corbusier who had impressed me so deeply when I was a student. But my desire for a new possibility of human life was such that I really hoped, in spite of all misgivings, that this man would be able to open a new way.

It is useless to enumerate here the merits of Le Corbusier; the importance of his inventions in every field is universally and rightly recognized. If I have loved Wright and admired Mies, Le Corbusier I have both loved and

admired. But as for his attitude, his orientation, I could not help noticing that in him too there was something wrong.

What was wrong was the malady of a certain period. I can describe this malady by selecting another work of Le Corbusier's for analysis.

If I had to criticize Le Corbusier through one single work, I would choose the complex at Chandigarh, the new political capital of the Punjab; for I think that it is his most important and most complete work.

But I prefer to speak of a thing that I have seen and experienced, not just studied through photographs. Therefore I choose the Ronchamp chapel, in the foothills of the Vosges.

Of all the works of Le Corbusier's, this is the one that has been most discussed by the critics. It has given rise to a number of polemics among critics and architects. To some of them it came as a surprise: they even considered it a betrayal of the principles that had inspired his earlier works. Still others have seen in it a triumph, the arrival at a final goal, a synthesis of the artist's life work. For me, who am familiar not only with his architecture, but also with his painting, it was no surprise at all. The Ronchamps chapel was a building which, free as it was from the practical needs conditioning normal buildings, gave the artist the possibility of creating a synthesis of all his experience.

Let me say right at the outset that I love Ronchamp. But also that I cannot accept it.

In critical terms, this church has some extremely positive aspects, with touches of genius, but also some negative ones. Among the positive aspects I should mention the invasiveness of the space, even though this space remains psychologically traditional, in spite of the novelty of the forms and the interpenetration of the volumes. The play of the plastic forms is both wisely calculated and fanciful. So is the composition of the materials. Here is an attempt at a synthesis of all the arts, including the word, which becomes form.



There are also negative aspects, such as the lack of clarity in the structural elements. These are masked by false, non-supporting walls, or by the justification, not always coherent, of certain plastic emphases which are occasionally a bit literary.

But once we have examined all the good and all the bad aspects, it remains obvious that we are faced with a masterpiece.

If I am unable to accept it, therefore, it is on account of the artist's orientation, not because of the result. Le Corbusier builds a church, and is not a Christian. Let it pass. The early Christians, too, used Roman forms, like the basilica. But what is more disturbing is the fact that this church, that is, this House of God and of everybody, was not born out of a collective need, as occurred during the Roman and Gothic periods, but out of the personal and subjective need of the architect who interprets in his own way a need that does not belong to anybody except himself; who creates a synthesis of values which are his own, not those of everybody, and this for a building which should belong to everybody, or at least to all Christians.

So once you have got over your astonishment at the novelty, the intelligence, the imagination of the architect, got over your aesthetic enjoyment of a thousand interesting details; once you have stepped out and find yourself on the lawn in front of the church and look out over the valley and the woods, you will discover that, in spite of everything, there is something wrong; that this church, in spite of its beauty, is not true; that it is false in that it is arbitrary and gratuitous, at least from the viewpoint we are investigating today.

We have mentioned three architects. We now pass on to an examination of the three painters I mentioned above.

Picasso is a Faustian and diabolical genius. Not only his body, his head, his eyes, his hands, brim over with genius—as some of my friends used to say, when I was living in Paris—but even the hair on his legs bristles with

genius. And this testimony is psychologically characteristic. I remember him, the first time in Paris, in his sculpture studio, crammed with the most incredible demonstrations of what man can do on earth. To see Picasso in his place of work is a unique experience. It seems as if, through his hands, he were able to do everything: transform things like a demiurge, testify to man's whole history; conduct a political battle; enter into the most hidden recesses of human psychology and bring his discovery forth into the light, cut up, like a quartered ox. What he can do is absolutely incredible. "Magic," one is tempted to say, in the face of his achievements.

Matisse. His outlook is just the contrary of Picasso's. For him the world is no longer visceral and social. It becomes sensual, full of the joy of living. Design and color acquire the freshness of a midday hour. Optimism reigns sovereign over pain. The world's pagan forces have been concentrated on this typically French being, this Cartesian analyzer of a world that circles around him while he observes it through his glasses.

Klee. The poet of painting who, in artistic evasion, seeks, disenchanted, other shores and other frontiers, to discover them at last in a world that finds in design its truth and its necessity.

And we might go on like that.

People who really know what is what.

But does there exist, among them, a minimum common denominator, apart from the fact that they are all geniuses?

You might answer: they are different personalities. But here you must be careful. Personality does not mean anarchy; it does not mean just a personal opinion; it does not mean originality.

Personality means: different expressions of one and the same world, of the same historical period. Down at the bottom, there is a common root. In this case, however, there is no common basis at all. Here the basis is abstract, arbitrary.

In conclusion, who among them has the answer for a world that is awaiting an answer? Who among them is able to give the right answer to this contorted, confused, twisted world?

Not one.

If we are consistent, and if we really follow them into their world, we find ourselves whirled around like wind-blown leaves. We find ourselves in a kaleidoscope of worlds that have nothing to do with one another. And we are terrified. Cubism, neoplasticism, surrealism, organicism, abstractionism in all its species and subspecies. Is this truth? Can we go on like this, in this crazy world?

Shall we find our way back to earth? Shall we be able to find again the rhythm of our days? The feeling of the seasons? Of a child's smile, of a baby nursing at its mother's breast? Shall we be able to find again the joy of existing in a world that is mysterious but free of ghosts, taboos, and men's talk?

Shall we be able to find a world free of "dope" and of myths, a world fit for us?

We sit down on a chair. Before our eyes we let pass all that man has done during these past hundred years. What a marvelous effort! What a distance man has covered! The earth has been revolutionized, and has acquired another dimension. It floats free, at last, in space within the universe.

In this explosion which has torn all ancient bonds, we may say that the earth has really been launched into space.

A new civilization is about to be born, a new way of existing. These efforts that man is making are like efforts to sweep the earth clean with a broom. Let's sweep it clean of all decay and of all ruin; let's leave on the earth only the remembrances of men of the past, of their history, their loves, their existence, in order to begin a new existence that will be reborn every day with the sun.

What has been has been.

Testimonies, memories, means.

Above all, means.

Means to fly. Means to go to the moon.

Means to build a skyscraper in three months.

Means to feed billions of people on earth.

But the savor of this new existence is yet to come.

We must find it, this savor, and we can find it together.

Individually we can still make discoveries, we can still make experiments, we can still make wonders and miracles; but individually, we shall not be happy, we shall not find what it is that unites men among themselves. Alone we shall not be able to build our towns. Alone we shall not be able to create what, until this day, has been called a civilization.

In this new world, which is about to come into being, each one will have his task, his scope. There will be those who will make shoes, others who will make houses, still others who will make interplanetary rockets. Time will again have a meaning, even if it is a new meaning; and the single actions of men, the actions of every day, will have acquired a new meaning: actions that serve life and without which life is a non-existence.

Actions. Actions accomplished with grace and not by grace. Actions accomplished spontaneously and not out of a sense of duty. Perfect actions, that is, executed without the pressure of a previously existing archetype, hence not, as formerly, imperfect actions ending in failure.

In this new world there is no room for you geniuses. There really is no room. Farewell, masters; farewell, geniuses! Your works will be the example of the last personal effort made by man. It may even be moving to look at them. But we shall feel no nostalgia for them. Because the things which all of us will make together will be much more beautiful—even from what you call an aesthetic angle—much greater, much more important, than those you made.

And it won't even matter who will have made them, just as it does not matter who made the starry sky, the mountains, the deserts, the sea. Just as it does not matter

who made the ants, the butterflies, the moss, and the flowers.

And yet they are beautiful, they are great, and they are important. But above all they are anonymous and each one of them has its personality because they all exist, they *really* exist!

# 6

## Feeling Objects

Cimabue painted a crucifix. There it was, suspended in the air, in the church of Santa Croce in Florence. A giant bird with its wings spread, hovering over the faithful. Everything was in it: suffering, blood, death, hope, the beyond. All the meaning of existence was concentrated in that greenish, racked, sweet, and suffering body. High up it was, that crucifix. Up there, untouchable. People knelt down before it, prostrate, and prayed. And that Christ answered each one of them in his own way.

Yesterday Cimabue's Crucifix was in the Museum of the Uffizi. People looked at it and said, "Beautiful." What do they mean, "Beautiful"? This death—beautiful? This suffering? This pain-racked body?

What sense is there in aesthetics when you set it face to face with ethics or with magic, let alone with the why of existence?

Today they have put it back into Santa Croce. Perhaps there was someone who understood that this crucifix was born for that church, for that purpose. But now it no longer has the same feeling. Today people walk into the church and say, "Beautiful!"

And that giant bird remains hovering there, all alone.

If there are still any faithful left today, they say their prayers in front of a statuette of painted terracotta: in front of a *santino*. But that crucifix remains there. At one time it had a meaning for men. Beyond aesthetics; beyond ethics; beyond magic. Even beyond existence.

It marked an age of man.

One day Picasso painted a neo-classical nude. Beautiful! Then he looked at it, and tore it up. That same day he painted the same body, cubist.

The critics say: a versatile artist. The critics say a lot of things. But the critics don't know what they are saying.

The truth is very simple. Picasso, just like anybody else—and, especially a Spaniard, strong and violent—Picasso really loves life. When he had finished his neo-classical painting or drawing, he discovered that the body which he wanted to be alive was dead. He wanted it to be beautiful, and instead it came out without beauty. So he preferred to destroy it. And now this broken-up body comes alive to some extent. At least, there is some mystery in it. It touches on the sacred. It's ugly, but it comes nearer to truth.

The critics say of the second one as well, "Beautiful. Magnificent." As if it were a question of beauty or ugliness. It is quite another question. Man is transforming himself: he prefers the vital to the beautiful.

Perhaps even Picasso himself does not know why his picture is so important. It is important just because it is ugly. Just because it is no longer aesthetic. Just because it bares men's entrails, blood, and death.

That is why Picasso is important. And that is the only reason.

Now let us take an Egyptian statue. To be quite precise, let us take one of Queen Tuna at the Vatican Museum in Rome.

The hall is decorated with horrid marble, in the rhetorical taste of *nouveaux-riches*. It is full of Egyptian statues. They all look alike, more or less. The material is the same, by and large: granite or basalt. The iconography is the same. I look at the statues. From the plastic point of view, one seems as good as the other. But there is one, in black basalt just in front of me, that grips my attention. I can't

take my eyes from it. They always return to it. Yet its form is just about the same as that of all the others.

I come closer. This statue emanates an overpowering presence. Magic. I come still closer. My eyes are just about level with the belly of the woman its represents. I can assure you that no other woman's belly, not even that of a pregnant woman, is so "full." This belly seems to contain the entrails of the Earth.

Luckily there is no one else in the hall. So I can make some experiments. I pull up my trouser on one leg and compare it with the leg of the statue. My leg seems false, the statue's leg seems real. I raise one of my hands and compare it with the hand of the statue. The same feeling. A perfect balance between the dynamic and the static is contained in this statue. Its face looks at me.

The statue talks to me. A long conversation begins between us, but here it suffices to record only some particular points. We get so warmed up, the statue and I, that after a little while we talk together like two old friends.

But the questions I want to raise now are of another kind. The authors of art books speak of stylization, of form, of death, and countless other things. But all of that has no meaning for me now. What has meaning for me is to think of the sculptor who made this statue. Of his private life. Of his trade. Of the relations that existed between him, the artist, and his society.

I can't tell how certain things happen. Perhaps it is a matter of intuition. What is sure is that the artist talked to me through this statue. That great artist.

He told me: I was a slave. Sculpture for me was forced labor. My master made me do it. The material was hard. Basalt. And there was no steel.

A slave! Bodily a slave. Spiritually a slave. But is not art an act of liberty, as everybody says it is?

How can a slave be an artist? And then: why did this slave make such a powerful, true, and magical statue? And how is it that the others are merely academic, seeing that the conditions were the same: slavery?



Before then, not only was I unable to understand colloquies of this kind, but the problem did not even exist for me. Today things of this sort don't seem complicated in the least. It is enough to be truthful.

I look around. We are in Egypt. Nearby they are building a pyramid. A teeming ant hill of male slaves at work. The sun is burning hot. Luckily there is the shade of the pyramid. Hidden behind enormous blocks of granite, the slave-sculptors are at work. There are two of them, close to each other. There are two blocks of basalt before them, of equal size, equal color. Their iconography is the same. One of the slaves keeps working. Slavery has killed his soul. He keeps working. With a kind of axe of hard stone, with chisels of even harder stone, he hews the basalt with heavy blows. The parts that have already been worked he polishes with siliceous sand. First he had cursed the work. When his body was unable even to sweat any longer, so burning was the heat, when his toil-racked muscles hardened to stone like the stone he was working on, when the dry spittle puckered the skin at the corners of his mouth, he stared at that piece of granite in front of him like an imbecile.

Then the guard walked up and whipped him.

To all appearances, the other slave was just like him: the same body, drained of all sweat, the same stony muscles, the same dry spittle. And the whipper whipped him too.

But he did not stare at his piece of granite like an imbecile. Inside of him, there was silence by now. The mad pain of his slave soul and of his slave body had carried him towards a new state. What he had felt was first hatred, then rebellion, then the wish to die. But he could not even die. At first the memories of his homeland kept him company. Then he experimented with faith in the future. Then he tried even to have faith in the present, that it be a shade less cruel to him. But not even the present could exist for him who by now had become just a thing.

Then, after the silence within him, there was nothing left but the void.

And one morning, at sunrise, he finally found himself alone and ready. Imagine: a slave. Free he was not: but ready, yes.

Ready for everything, from now on.

It was this readiness, even in slavery, that made him an artist.

That was how he touched on the roots of the real, became one with the world, and felt alive in spite of everything.

And that was how his sculpture came alive.

I said before that I had a colloquy with the artist through his sculpture. Don't worry. I could not swear, the way you swear in court and say: Your Honor, I swear it, I talked with the artist. I am not a miracle-maker, not a fortuneteller, not one given to the spiritistic sciences. I am just a plain man and all I want to do is be honest. No. I couldn't swear it.

But I could swear that this was the artist's condition when he made that statue. I did not do any checking as to whether some Egyptian sculptors really were slaves. Their job was toilsome at any rate and did not accord with the lives of free men and intellectuals like the Egyptian priests.

Nor did I care to check whether the tools they used at that time were really stone axes and chisels and sand for polishing.

What I mean is this: that the form does not matter; that "beautiful" does not mean a thing. That you understand nothing unless you enter, through the work of art, into the state of the artist, so as to grasp its intrinsic meaning.

That artist was alive. His statue is alive and speaks to me who am alive. That is all, and only that is important.

What is more: that artist has reached anonymity: he is Anonymous (14th Century B.C.).

Being Anonymous (20th Century A.D.) is another thing.

But here we see—and this is important—how a slave

could reach, not through choice, but by dint of his own inner necessity, an existential state inherent in the cosmos and in reality.

The Frescoes in the Etruscan Tombs. These Cities of the Dead are as vast as the cities of the living.

The Etruscans believed in death. They furnished and decorated their tombs. Their painters painted for death, not for life. They were truly anonymous.

By this I mean quite specifically the position, the attitude, those painters took toward existence.

Early in the morning the painter went to work, the way a worker goes to his factory today. He went underground. He painted underground. He painted on a humid layer of tufa just laid open by a pick-axe.

What does it mean, to paint for the dead? What does it mean, to paint a tomb intended to remain sealed and closed forever, a tomb which never would have been opened were it not for the curiosity of modern men who break in on and plunder every aspect of the ancient mind? What does it mean to bury masterpieces together with the dead?

The Etruscan artist certainly did not feel the way our painters feel today, when they photograph their paintings as soon as they are done, try to get them reproduced and published in the most important or the most swanky magazine, ship them from show to show like rare objects, wait with their tongues out to be written up by famous critics, sell their paintings through agents and merchants, hope to get them placed in a museum!

Vanity, ambition, and glory were things unknown to the painters of death. No prize except their daily bread was their reward.

Perhaps, though, vanity, ambition, and glory existed even then; perhaps they were of a kind that we painters of today do not even dream of. Perhaps, at that time there was hope in the judgment of God, together with the hope of a life beyond. Vanity, ambition, and glory *in aeternis*.

We have to content ourselves with the vanity, ambition,

and glory of our short life on earth. In a philosophical sense, perhaps we are more modest. But in the reality of the daily action, which I think is the only one that should interest us today, in the existential reality of our being, I give my benediction to—which means in Latin, I “speak well of” (*bene dico*)—those anonymous Etruscan painters. They created masterpieces with simplicity, with naturalness; like someone who gets up in the morning, perhaps at sunrise, looks out the window, his body still heavy with sleep, and says “Good morning” to the early risers who are going to work, and thinks of the shadowed side of the earth where the sun does not shine, and says “Good night and sleep well” to other men.

And I feel like thanking those ancient painters of two thousand-odd years ago, who had not yet awakened to awareness of the ego in the modern sense, but who just because of this could labor with humility on a work which, scarce completed, was destined to be buried in the earth, together with the dead, for ever and ever.

Now let us think of Negroes and their sculpture.

Those sculptures which until a very few years ago were not even considered objects of art, but curios, stuff not fit for art galleries but, at most, for the various *musées de l'homme*, ethnological and anthropological collections.

Until quite recently it would have been out of the question to catch, on the face of anyone looking at a Negro statue, the ecstatic and inspired expression one sees on the faces of thousands of tourists when they look at a painting by Raphael. “A miracle.” “Divine grace.” “Touched by the Holy Spirit.” The air is filled with echoes of such words whispered by people who really don’t have the faintest idea of what a miracle is, or grace, or the Holy Spirit.

And then, when you happen to see the truthfulness of a Negro statue next to the rhetorics of a Western painting of the 16th Century, even by a famous artist, you realize

how stupid and biased men's judgment has been, and still is today, about objects created by men.

In one pan of the scales, together with the Negro sculpture, is the weight of men still tied to the soil, immersed in the mystery of life, awed by everyday occurrences such as birth and death, careful of truth in the act they are accomplishing and in the choice of the material which is to testify to this act.

In the other pan of the scales, together with famed Western sculpture and painting, is the weight of men more detached from the soil, who have lost contact with the things of the world and with the world itself, hedonists pleased with their objects which are by now stripped of any universal truth; who no longer pay the slightest attention to the truthfulness of their acts, because by now someone undoubtedly has thought about all the problems of life and death, and everything has been solved. If only you follow some moral precept, you may sit comfortably in your armchair and wait for future harvests of paradise and the beyond.

Take one of those Negro statues, chiseled in one single piece out of a tree trunk. It still smells of tree, but at the same time it has become a woman giving birth, the whole earth giving birth. Or *A Man Seated*: the whole world waiting.

Why and how are these figures so different from ours?

I guess I don't know. Those Negroes are too far away from me. I am old and they are young. I belong to an ancient civilization, and they are primitive. Thus I don't know for sure how they face the material, their block of wood, chisel in hand, in their immersed psychology.

I do not hear the exact colloquy that took place between them and the statue.

Nor do I know what exact connection there was between those hands and legs, which have become one single vertical line, and the howls of the hyena in the night.

Between that round heavy head balanced on a skeleton-like body, and their own heads, big in the night like the

vault of the sky, their scared wide-open eyes among the stars.

Between this smooth drum-taut belly and the ritual dance for maternity. I don't know it, even though I can imagine it: even though basically the sculptures themselves explain it to me in clear enough terms, reawakening in me ancestral earth-bound impulses.

But, on the rational level, I know the reason. Here, too, the reason lies wholly in the "act" itself.

Sculpturing, for them, was not aestheticism; it was the accomplishment of a magical act. Sculpturing, for them, was not the production of decorative objects to be hung on walls or placed as knickknacks on chests. Sculpturing, for them, was to propitiate God or the gods, to make peace with the powers of nature; perhaps to kill a distant enemy by piercing the wooden heart with witchcraft's fatal nail.

What they produced were thus not objects to look at, but useful things to facilitate or to accomplish the acts of their daily existence.

Paolo Uccello's *Battle*, London, the National Gallery. Paris, the Louvre. Florence, the Uffizi.

Too bad there were not four of them. Otherwise, with the Madrid Prado added, the four *Battles* of Paolo Uccello would have dominated the Big Four among museums.

And they really were the canopy of a bed. The bed in Lorenzo's room in the Palace of the Medici.

For the museum displays, skillful restorers have added odd bits of painting at the upper corners: festoons with fruit and flowers—in the space that originally was occupied by the capitals of the posts supporting the canopy.

Now I wonder whether it is permissible to tamper so utterly with the concept of value and utility of a work of art. Whether it is permissible to change the aesthetic concept of a painting so radically. If I were Paolo Uccello, I should get very angry. In spite of the fame that goes with it. And I'll tell you why.

Paolo Uccello must have been rather wacky, for those

times. Just think of it: horses that become form, color; spears that become rhythms; earth and sky that become stereometry transposed into plane geometry. Paolo Uccello is said to be one of the inventors of perspective. Perspective. What does that mean?

Perspective means that man has become the center of things, the measure of things; man at grips with his own liberty.

Unfortunately people always talk in terms of style. But what do they mean when they speak of different styles, unless they mean different visions of the world? Think of an object: a battle, a landscape, or a glass. Paolo Uccello has not yet been born. Perspective has not yet been invented. The object is at a distance from me. As though seen from a remote point of view; from an infinitely remote point of view. The object is detached, contemplated, judged, even adored if you wish, but always outside me.

But if I bring the point of view nearer, if the object comes nearer, it is all around me; the "I" becomes a character; I exist, the object acquires a value in relation to me. In other words, God must take man into account, and the converse.

Wacky. Crazy Paolo Uccello. A painter who works for the first time inside and not outside the painting. And this he does without "knocking a hole" in the canvas (as we painters say), as the various mannerists did after him, transforming his pure invention of space into something descriptive or scenographic.

Yes, I should get angry, terribly angry.

I, Paolo Uccello, had painted three battles. I had arranged these three battles in a U-shape. These three spaces, focused on one point, were something truly impressive. When I painted them, I was at the center of the three pictures. That was perspective!

It was all a new world around me, a dynamic, living, rolling world. I lift my hand. It stands out against the background of a horseman. Also my hand is part of the composition. I breathe. I expand my lungs. My body

occupies a new vital space in the natural space. My body has acquired weight, has become a center of gravity. I, Paolo Uccello, in full consciousness, travel for the first time with the earth through space. I too am bound to a center.

Psychologically it must have been sheer madness. Think of the man who lived and slept in that bed, under that canopy. Mornings he would wake up looking, not at flowered wallpaper, but at three surrounding battles. He must have felt "strong and lordly" and self-possessed, the man who thus rose in the morning, measuring his own body by the spears, horses, and cuirasses of Paolo Uccello.

Not that I should care to sleep in such a setting. I prefer to wake up with the sun and the sky in my eyes. I, Anonymous (20th Century). But if we want to understand the history of man, we must place things in the context of their real meaning, not measure this meaning by the yardstick of taste.

From the point of view of its relation to the landscape, to the city, which has remained just about as it was five centuries ago, the Cathedral of Chartres conveys one of the greatest lessons architecture can teach.

I said the Cathedral of Chartres only because it was the first to come to my mind. I could just as well have taken other names, similar pieces of architecture, Gothic ones, or others, of another style, of another time.

What is important to me is the "state" of the colloquy with a piece of architecture.

So I am traveling by car to Chartres, with my wife.

I stop on the road. We look at this architecture from a distance. Mystic elevation, raised by men with an eschatological vision of life, in honor of a God. This is what it undoubtedly was, for the people of a certain period. We, instead, look at this hill that becomes walls, these walls that become city, this city that becomes the base for this tremendous human sculpture. Then we enter the city. Just as the hill, from the outside, leads, volumetrically, to



the cathedral, so, planimetrically, does the dynamic web of streets, inside the city. Seen from nearby, within arm's reach, with our eyes glued to its walls, the magic of this immense sculpture presses on our hearts. How great is Man when he has a concrete faith! But we see other things, too, still greater than faith. The chisel's contact with the rock, the lines of gravity that course along the ribs like life blood, the presence of the choral, anonymous act that rises from the roots to the pinnacles. Pinnacles charged with human spirit as you can charge points, in physics, with electricity.

We enter.

We subject the place to a long, detailed analysis. From the first emotional sensations, evoked by shadows and colored lights, to a rational analysis of the sequences of structures. From the total setting of volume to the detail of the glass panes as matter-color.

At last we stretch out on two benches. We stay there for a long time in silence. Until I break this silence, turning to my wife, saying: "Darling. Strange. The men who built this cathedral believed in the Christian God. They were men of faith, of charity, and of hope. And yet, there is fear in this church, there is wickedness, and a vague uncertainty of the spirit such as you do not find even in a totem. A new type of space has been conquered, people say, in the Gothic Cathedrals. It's true. But it is still a mental space, detached from real space, not "relationed" with natural things. This Cathedral, after all, is nothing but a great rock rising from the hill, carved from rather than built on it; the stained-glass windows with their physical quality of color-matter become walls forbidding contact with the air, with the sky. You can't see the moon from here inside, let alone the stars.

"When all is said, we are still underground. This is a tomb. Man is still in the earth. Who knows how much time must still pass before man will be able to emerge, to come forth into the light, and exist?"

The Experience of Leonardo da Vinci. *The* genius, by antonomasia! So they say!

A few years ago, they celebrated the fifth centenary of his birth. And people came hurrying from all parts of the world to give, and listen to, lectures on him: the great Leonardo da Vinci! Scientist, musician, philosopher, writer, architect, painter, sculptor!

I too gave a lecture, but it was of a very different kind.

This, briefly, is approximately what I said:

No. Leonardo da Vinci was not the universal genius who succeeded in whatever he set out to do. The contrary would be closer to the truth. Leonardo da Vinci failed in everything. He failed as a scientist. No specific discovery remains that bears his name. He failed as a musician. Nothing remains of his sculpture. As architect-planner-engineer, he has left us a few pieces of writing, a few designs. As painter, he did little, and his most important paintings he abandoned before finishing them. His enormous importance, his extreme genius, lies, probably, in the fact that he represents the first and greatest conscious failure in the history of man. That is how he ushered in the modern era, with all its problems. His method remained valid up till today. And only today are we able to initiate a new one, after a failure of mankind that is no longer individual but collective.

Let us go to examine his works together. The works of his youth, like the *Annunciation*, are negligible. Rhetoric, the idle dream of perfection, the absurd striving for the sublime, still obstruct the seriousness of his analysis, the thorough search for the value of existence.

And I don't have much use either for the overly famous ones—like the *Gioconda*, where love becomes idealized, sublimated, incarnate in its disembodiment—which testify to a Leonardo strained in the effort to achieve perfection beyond the every-day hour of existence.

Let us pass on to others. To *The Last Supper*, *The Adoration of the Magi*—that picture “impossible to finish,” which has remained bitumen half-shadow, where

human bodies, landscape, earth, and sky merge into a single existing reality.

Let's go to the Uffizi Gallery.

You can spend days and days in the Uffizi.

And there are days when, caught by the directness of the relationship between content and form, you want to stop at the primitives, especially Cimabue, and the Sienese and Giotto, and nothing else would seem to you so true and natural and simple, and you feel that you just cannot look at anything of a later date.

There are days in which a sense of painting overwhelms you: painting as an intellectual feat; painting as a pictorial feat; painting as awareness of the world as cosmic value. On such days, Paolo Uccello's *Battle* keeps you nailed to the spot, and you forget about all the other "treasures" that fill the halls of this museum. And there are days when, in your own carnality and more human sensuality, you feel attracted by the canvases of the Venetian masters, with their color, their light, and their texture redolent of flesh and immanent beauty.

But if one day you walk into the Uffizi Gallery in a mood of indifference toward painting, because of one of a thousand things that may have happened to you in your daily life—like the death of a friend, the remembrance of the war, or the birth of a child—if, in such a mood, you don't give a hoot either for the metaphysical, transcendental, divine aspect of painting or for its physical, immanent, human side, and all that interests you is the seriousness of the quest, the possibility of seeing the world after the collapse of all values—as you stand stripped and naked in the face of the existence of everything and everybody, you will feel drawn into that ugly room where, badly placed, in a poor light, sad and solitary, the *Adoration of the Magi* will appear to you in all its fulness and, if you want so to phrase it, in all its greatness. And you'll stand there breathless.

All the rest are stupendous masterworks of painting.

Here it is impossible even to speak of painting. The

canvas is but an instrument of search. Charcoal, brush, and bitumen are but sharpened means of enquiry, with which Leonardo da Vinci searches the world. There is nothing idealized or mythified any longer.

Through these figures, these faces, these hands, the steps of these stairs, these war horses, you are facing all humanity, with its questions, its sufferings, its reality.

Leonardo da Vinci gives no personal answers. None. But he creates relationships. The relation between the knee that weighs on the earth and that earth; between an eye that observes an object, and that object itself; between the shadow-absence and the light-presence; between the garment and its folds, and the body that breathes under it; between the fire at the center of the painting, and the circle extending round it; between the leaves of the trees and the air itself. Could the Madonna exist without the bent heads of horse and rider? The child, without the discernment of these leaves? The emaciated faces of the old men without the strength of the warriors? That sweet and serene face, without the suffering and painful uncertainty of so many other faces?

Certainly, there are other analogous iconographic achievements; but so evident and so serious a process of relationships as this has never been achieved through one single subject. Relationships. Where the addition of another thing would imply a gratuitous answer, Leonardo da Vinci stops short. Not even the color has any meaning. What would it mean, to answer with a touch of red, or black, or blue. Nothing gratuitous, nothing decorative. Where his enquiry ceases to communicate only through itself, where it would become necessary to answer with personal opinions, because the thing in itself does not yield any further answer, there Leonardo da Vinci stops. He puts down brush and bitumen. Other things, far more important than painting, hold his attention. There is a whole new world opening up, a world which, after an incubation period that lasted five centuries, is finally struggling to light today and claims its right to existence.

I am in Brunelleschi's Cloister at Santa Croce in Florence. Not in the small one, with the Pazzi Chapel, which I like less. But in the big one, next to it, which I love much more.

I feel good. I am standing in a perfect square. Beyond and within everything. Everything is in here. Outside there is only the sky.

It is a perfect square. Hence it has a center. I move toward the center. Arrived at the center I feel attracted to the periphery. So I get going again. I walk up and down. And the square transforms itself, according to the changing perspectives. What a wonderful chance to think freely, alone, on a square piece of earth conquered by man!

And if I roll back through history, and put myself in the position of a man at the time of Brunelleschi, I must admit that the people of that time were tremendous! Capable of syntheses, capable of dominating history, capable of having a center and taking a walk around it!

And with this thought I can even leave the Cloister and betake myself to other works of architecture, especially of the Renaissance: a domed church, for example, or a palace.

And I think of that beatitude, of man's measure at that time, of his prodigious equilibrium. And I abandon myself to my thoughts.

But all of a sudden questions arise in my mind. What is the meaning of this calm and serene geometry? What is the meaning of this spirit of symmetry? What does it mean to break the outside in order to isolate oneself inside a magic square?

What is the basic meaning of this separation between things? Inside-outside, beauty-ugliness, life-death?

And then I put myself this question: In order to save oneself, to survive, is it legitimate to invent, for one's own use, a beautiful but basically artificial world? Is it right to separate a square piece of earth from the earth as a whole? Is it permissible to sublimate oneself in con-

temptation, once the walls outside have created a barrier between oneself and the others? Is this the right thing, at least for me, a man of our time?"

How lucky you were, men of other times! Lucky in a way that we no longer can be. Nevermore.

How lucky.

Then I remain in my cloistered corner, in silence, silence also within myself.

After some seconds, perhaps minutes, a question wells up within me, and, at the same time, an answer:

Lucky? No.

This dramatic epoch of ours holds a much deeper mystery.

## Intermezzo

I should like this book to be for everybody. Not out of ambition, even though it is the logical ambition of every writer to have his book become universal. If I say that I want this book to be for everybody, it is only because, obviously, the modern crisis involves men in every walk of life and because everyone who wants to solve his own personal problems—including even those of his own job or craft—must solve them together with others, collectively.

This is the one and only reason why my book is so anti-specific, so generic—if you want to put it that way. Being myself an architect, I could, to be sure, have written more from the point of view of the architect; as a painter, I could have written more from the painter's angle; but the fact is that architecture and painting are too much under the influence of the historical process of a period. What meaning would a book have today if it were written only from the point of view of an architect or a painter? There are already so many books of this kind! My book must be different, because this time of ours is different. It must not, and it cannot, belong just to some people. It must belong to all.

This is quite a risk, and I know it. A thing that sets out to belong to everybody runs the risk of not belonging to anybody. But if this book is to serve any purpose at all, that is it.

I know that people, even in good faith, might say, simply, or oversimply:

"My dear Ricci, you have got to be more specific. It would be far more useful if you told us, from your experience, what you think of architecture, of painting, of town-planning, without philosophical speculations and elucubrations. Tell us how you would make a city, how you would erect buildings, if you were free to do as you please, and let it go at that. Perhaps you could design for us a theoretical city, a theoretical piece of architecture. That's what we want, and forget about the rest."

It is true: it would be easier. But this is just what I cannot and will not do.

Out of an apparent desire for clarity (which, after all, is nothing but ambition), I cannot and will not say what I should want to do. That would be my personal opinion. And what are we to make, by now, of all these personal opinions of so many individual men? No, what I must do, if I can, is to create a new opening, a new way of solving the problems together. This, by God, is my only ambition. And I don't mean this "together" in a demagogical way, which today comes all too easily. No, I am an aristocrat, if you wish. I've actually been accused of being one. All I mean by this word "together" is that everybody should be free to act according to what he is and do what he is able to do. What matters is that every act of every individual should have the same value.

But let's talk of ourselves. Let's narrow down the circle.

My book consists of two parts. You have read the first part—unless you are the type of reader I am, who, before really digging into a book, does some exploring. I read three lines here, ten there. At random. As if I wanted to get acquainted with the person I have before me. I look into his face, his eyes. Then I observe some other details. Maybe his shoes, his necktie. The way he gestures. The way he smiles. When I have thus made my contact with that person, I read him altogether. But let's assume that you have read this book the way normal people read: that is, starting from the beginning.



I don't know whether I have succeeded, or to what extent I have succeeded, but my intention, at any rate, was to explain that in a period of transition, like ours today, it is impossible to speak of certain detailed aspects of human activity without questioning the roots, the trunk of the tree from which these details hang like leaves. There is fear rampant today; there exists a sort of taboo, whether conscious or unconscious, against facing problems in their basic aspect. It would seem as though man—wise and wary of the various cure-alls that history has proposed at different times only to discard them each in turn as harmful or at least useless—has now adopted an apparently more humble or timid position, putting the big metaphysical problems aside in order to come to grips with the little and more specific ones, the small change of every day.

True, there is more sanity, more realism in this attitude, and from a number of points of view I share it; but it overlooks the basic fact that problems of detail can exist only after the over-all problems have been solved. Perhaps this is a vice of mine as an architect; but I am unable to study an architectural detail unless I have mastered the mass of a building. It is useless to perfect a detail when the building in its total aspect does not yet exist. But unfortunately this is just what is happening even in architecture. Instead of facing the basic problems, many architects, in the best of cases, fool around with problems of detail in a sophisticated manner; and so they remain stuck in the sphere of the decorative. Yet the matter seems so obvious. A problem of detail can arise only when a civilization is well established and formed; and an artisan can work securely only when his taste coincides with that of an entire epoch.

And if it is true that we live in a period of transition, it is true also that we cannot go into the details of a thing which is not ours, which has not become a daily habit, an almost automatic gesture of our everyday way of life.

And so it happens that architects and painters, and sometimes representatives of other arts, occasionally get involved in endless highbrow discussions without ever coming to the heart of the question: whether life is worth living or not—which, it seems to me, must be decided before you can start on any work at all.

We must get out of these quicksands and find solid ground under our feet again, before we can think of building. Or else we remain captives in a ghost world.

Now if we look back in history we see that time and again, and more or less successfully, man has made this attempt to find solid ground on which to build. It is useless to judge *a posteriori* whether he did it well or badly. What is sure is that we can no longer believe in certain values. We cannot believe any longer, for instance, in the idol of the savage to whom the prettiest girl in the tribe must be sacrificed when there is a drought. We can no longer believe that the sun turns round the earth. And yet we must find a common ground, or else whatever we do is arbitrary.

If today we are unable to find a common ground, this means that difficulties of a new sort have somehow arisen. The main difficulty arises, perhaps, from the very fact that the acceptance of any value *a priori* has been shown to be erroneous.

On the other hand, we are in no way different from our predecessors. The questions that have beset them are besetting us too. Is there a God? What is the meaning of our life? Is there a beyond? These are the questions of all times and of all people. And human actions were conditioned by the answers that men gave to these questions. Childish questions, you may say. The questions we asked as children were the same our ancestors asked!

But they were logical and human questions: only thanks to them could the civilizations of the past be born and live.

Today things are different. Something has changed. An intellectual today will not and cannot ask himself ques-

tions of this sort. There may be two reasons for this: either because these questions have been answered by now or because they have become immaterial. But as long as the questions exist, intellectual honesty demands of us to ask them and to find an answer. Or else we shall lose ourselves in a dangerous game of hide-and-seek. An absurd game in marshlands where quicksands threaten to swallow up the players.

And this is just the spectacle we are witnessing today.

How could I have talked of certain problems of architecture and painting without touching on arguments of this sort? What meaning would a cathedral have without a God, a specific God? A statue of Jupiter, without Jupiter? What sense would there be to those materials, those structures, those spaces used in one way instead of in another?

It was these considerations that forced me to write a first part, in order to justify the second. I felt obliged, that is, to show and explain my type of religious feeling, of social awareness, of human reality in synthesis. Otherwise nothing would have made any sense at all. An idle game, perhaps intelligent, but ambiguous, likely to add confusion to confusion.

I am neither a theologian nor a philosopher. I am not able to identify myself with any of the existing and, so to speak, official categories. In other words, I am not a Christian, but neither am I an atheist. If someone asked me whether or not I believe in God, I could not answer him either way. If someone asked me to what current political party I belong or should care to belong, I couldn't answer either. Or I might answer that I believe in God, and yet be honest; and that, when I vote at election time, I cast my ballot for the party I believe most up-to-date, even though there is no party I feel would really represent me. I don't abstain from voting, yet I still feel honest. This would seem to be an equivocal position, but it is not. On the contrary, it is the most "historical" of all possible positions: contingent on our

past and suited to our present. It is dynamic, alive, and vital, and is transformed with every passing day.

More than that. If it might not seem ambition or sheer folly, I should say that this position—which is not mine because I have not yet reached it, but is the position of Anonymous (20th Century)—contains within itself all the positions of the past, in a natural way; none excluded, not even those that seem to conflict with one another but that in reality are only two faces of the same coin.

I have tried to demonstrate that out of all the old possibilities a new one is being born. A possibility in which such problems as whether or not there is a god, or whether we shall have a life beyond death, no longer matter. Because both alternatives are contained in this possibility. If men have asked themselves whether God existed and then answered the question affirmatively, it meant, after all, that they were not with God and in God; otherwise this would have been a natural and unquestionable fact. Just as, quite naturally, we should not dream of asking whether a dog exists, when the dog is right there with us. If people asked themselves whether they would go on living after death, and then they answered affirmatively, it meant that they failed to understand the twofold, simultaneous aspect, death-life; or else they would not have been afraid of death. These are not paradoxes; they are simple, elementary things. If a man lived really infused by the Holy Ghost—to speak in terms of Christianity—he would have no problems. They would not exist for him, because they would solve themselves, naturally, by “grace.” In a certain sense, a perfect Christian should be very close to this position. Now I believe that one can live in the “mystery.” It is this mystery that makes us live, hence eschewing questions and answers.

I could modify the popular saying, “While there’s life, there’s hope,” and say instead, “While there’s mystery, there’s life.”

It seems to me that there is a marvelous new possibility of existence. But how can I demonstrate it, if the basic

characteristic of this possibility is that you cannot assert it, just as you cannot deny it? What can be done to convey this new possibility, so it can be felt, before passing on to more specific problems?

And so I have tried. I have lived the chapters you have read. I have tried to make words give direct testimony about my life. I know that words can never fully do so—at least not as they are today. But I have tried at least to do with words what you do with a caress when you are in love. I have used words, that is, to convey action. Since words can never replace acts, I know that my attempt was doomed to failure from the beginning. But I am naïve enough still to believe that the reader who has read these pages in good faith and with good will, will understand—through these words, these phrases which cover up a situation, through these situations which cover up an existence—that there is today the possibility of a new form of existence: a possibility which I call the existence of Anonymous (20th Century).

When I speak of choice in the confusion, I hope that something comes through concerning the existence and non-existence of God as the only reality. When I speak of the happiness or unhappiness of man, I hope that something comes through about the possibility of a life that man accepts in its totality and lives without the hedonism of happiness or the masochism of unhappiness. When I speak of subjective and objective, I hope that it becomes clear that both the subjective and the objective position are nonsensical and impossible, inasmuch as man is a resultant of relations. When I say farewell to the masters, I hope the reader understands the impossibility of a life regulated by norms established by authority; because there no longer exists any fixed parameter. Each person can but live within his own dimension, and each dimension, whether small or large, has the same value as every other dimension. When, lastly, I try to show through some examples, in the chapter, "Feeling Objects," how the "value" of things is subject to change,

even in cases where it had seemed classified and well established by history, I hope the reader becomes aware of how many are the new attitudes, the new possibilities, the new roads, that lie open before man today, and that the only thing to do is to explore them.

The second part of this book is more specific, more technical, more obvious, because more closely linked to my job as an architect and painter. What is important to me is to reveal, not a new norm for painting or architecture, but a new attitude of man toward painting, architecture, town planning.

To clarify this point I should like to cite four books by four major architects: *Collected Works*, by Le Corbusier; *An Autobiography* by Wright; *Integral Architecture*, by Gropius; *Planning for Survival*, by Neutra.

These four books are really important. They have taught me something, they have interested me. For their own generation, they are perfect books. And yet, from my point of view, all four of them have grave shortcomings—if you read them, that is, with reference to the quest of *our* generation.

Wright's book is autobiographical. For this very reason it is occasionally most beautiful and poetic, even moving. Its main interest stems from the fact that he elucidates the process that leads from man to architecture, from thought to form. But on the other hand, it is too subjective a book. What is even worse is the book's tone, the Messianic tone of one "anointed by the Lord," able to solve all problems right off the bat. This is an attitude inconceivable today.

The book, or rather the books, of Le Corbusier are of a quite different character. Diary notes, concepts and ideas about architecture, unprejudiced, visionary, but for the most part controlled and rationalized. Perhaps they convey a more powerful lesson, or at least a more complete one. But in his writings, too, the voluntary, gratuitous,

and dictatorial act is all too manifest. His writings reflect the age of the superman.

Gropius' book is at the opposite pole. It consists of the texts of various lectures. And, in some aspects, Gropius shows himself to be the most modern of the four. He is more a researcher than an artist. He tries to reach an objective rather than a subjective position. He endeavors to find his place in the machine age. He tries the scientific method of research rather than a personal intuition of the historical process. But here, too, something is missing. His attention is captivated by the details before he establishes the general mass. The problems he faces are those that may come up at a convention, that may be faced sitting behind a desk; they do not comprise the problem of existence, which is at the root of the matter.

Neutra's book is more professorial. He tries to define a philosophical system. He tries to reconcile metaphysical and physical experience, he attempts a fusion of the rational and the irrational. But, when all is said, what is reached is a sort of theosophy of architecture.

In conclusion, all four of these books, different from each other as they are, show traits which I think are no longer admissible. They are the books of men who make history; men who, in today's jumble and turmoil, feel aloof and outside. They know the remedies, they feel secure. In the last analysis they think that if their own proposals were carried out, every problem would be solved.

Our own situation, however, is totally different. Perhaps the difference is rooted in the fact that these are men who belong to the First World War; we belong to the Second. We have nothing sure to propose; we can offer neither plans nor rules. Rules, for us, are just plain academic, and nothing else. We have been licked; we are beaten; just for this reason we have analyzed, and are analyzing, history to detect the errors, the cause of this crisis. After we have analyzed everything, what remains

to us is a handful of flies. Or not even that. Our hands hold emptiness, nothingness.

This is our point of departure.

Do not misunderstand me. It is not that we intentionally create a *tabula rasa*. We are fed up with revolutions and pseudo-revolutions. We are very deeply interested in the past. We want to use this past. And so we use also those men of the past, and many of our tools have come to us from them. But our way of facing problems is different. Or, to be more precise, for us the old problems no longer exist, and thus there can be no solutions either. Ours is a dynamic world, and we cannot stop it. We must analyze it, see, work, and conclude *within* this movement; and never must we pose as judges *outside* of it.

We are within the melee, not above it.



## Raison d'Être of Painting

Painting is not a state of perfection; it is not a state of grace.

You paint because there is something inside your chest that wants to get out. It cannot stay in there. It hurts. It hurts like a head-splitting toothache. It must get out.

On a different body, with a different sort of temperament, as they call it, the effect might be different. Instead of hurting, the thing inside your chest might make you want to throw up, or simply to lie flat on your back, with your eyes turned to the sky. As if the earth were a hammock rocking softly through space.

Come to think of it, my own condition is also variable.

Sometimes I feel like weeping, at other times like howling. I want to smash one rock against another, or caress the grass. Or I feel like taking a razor blade and cutting a snail into pieces. Or I want to admire the design traced by a fly in the air.

Yes, the condition is variable. But the state remains. The solitude is there to stay.

What is more, this is the way it has always been. Always. I remember what I said in a lecture some time ago. I said:

What was the origin of painting? When the first human beings appeared on earth, whether they were born of a touch of God's magic wand, or through a slow mysterious evolutionary process (and, as far as I am concerned, it does not make the slightest difference which), did they live in a Paradise Lost or in an animal-like state, some-

what like monkeys (and this does not make a bit of difference to me either)?

What is sure is that human beings at that time obeyed some sort of rhythm, just as animals do today. Perhaps they were more at peace. Relations with the things around them were more spontaneous and simple. But it is also sure that mankind upset this equilibrium in order to pass on to a higher level.

The Bible tells us that the first human beings disobeyed God's commands, and hence they were driven out of paradise. I don't believe that. I believe that the disobedience was an act of obedience; for, according to a plan unknown to him, man had to leave this animal paradise in order to pass—or at least to try to pass—into another one: that of knowledge, consciousness.

Now let me venture what may look like a wild guess: I believe that the rebels were painters. Or, if you prefer, it was the art of painting that drove men into rebellion. Therefore the painters were later accursed. This may sound like a tall story, but it is not far from the truth.

Let's try to see why. Even though God-knows-how-many thousands of years have gone by since man's first appearance on earth—so many that there is no memory of what we looked like at that time—we have remained so beastly in so many of our ways that it should not be difficult for us to roll back through history and to put ourselves in the shoes, or if you prefer, in the skins, of the first men.

Let's pretend, then, for a moment, that the two of us here, one facing the other, are these first men.

We are unable to talk, to write, or to do practically any of the things people can do today. But there are many things that we can do far better than modern men.

We make love more naturally, less hampered by complexes, and in accordance with natural laws rather than arbitrarily. We work only when we have to for our maintenance. We sleep when we feel like it. We change with the changing seasons and the varying constellations.

We really do a number of things which today only a few people can afford to do, want to do, or, if you wish, are intelligent enough to do. We give expression to our innermost feelings, feelings the animals also share and show: anger, jealousy, pain; but we have no idea of how our fellow-man sees the world; how it appears to him, what he thinks of it.

It was at this point that Adam ate of the apple of knowledge. The taboo of mankind. And God punished him. Granted, God's nature is different from man's, so that I am in no position to know how He thinks and how He acts, but if I may take the liberty of comparing His ways to mine, considering that it is said that we were created in His image and likeness, I can assure you that God did not punish us for that.

We men, in fact, are thrilled to see an intelligent animal, a dog who carries a newspaper, who obeys our call. God must, in the same way, have been really pleased on seeing His own creature performing such cute and endearing actions as that of trying to achieve knowledge.

When, for instance, man discovered fire, God must have jumped with joy. If he punished us, if he ever really punished us, then it was because we believed we had become masters of earth and heaven. But this is an argument that carries us off the track.

Not to know what others think of the world, whether they see it the way we do or differently, means to be sick with solitude. All that men have ever done, good or evil, beautiful or ugly, they did in order not to feel lonely.

Just imagine, I am walking barefoot, on the sand. The imprints of my feet remain behind me. The sun is shining, projecting my shadow on the ground. I look at the water. I see my image reflected. The animals also do that. But after a first shock of wonder, they pass on, in philosophical acceptance. But not men. Man was born headstrong. Those banal chance observations became important to him. Something inside him did not function any more

and had to be expressed, had to be consciously shared with another human being.

To observe facts, to connect them, and to express them in concepts, means to philosophize.

To articulate sounds, to regroup and arrange them in a certain order, means to make music.

To look at the sky and the stars, to pass judgment on some human actions, to watch living beings being born and die, to try to pass before the Before and after the After and to objectivate this, means to found creeds or religions.

But since it is absurd to think that God created one man a philosopher, another a painter, or a third one a musician, you can imagine that at the beginning, whether one was a philosopher, a painter, or a scientist, he performed acts quite similar one to the other, not separate as they unfortunately are in our era of technology and specialization. Therefore I am not raising any question of superiority among these various forms of human activity. But what I really believe—not in the Leonardo da Vinci sense—is this: Sight is the most sensitive, or rather, the most evident, of the human senses. Thus when men tried consciously to express themselves to one another, they must have tried, before any other, that language which today is called painting.

And so it came about that one man looking at the moon and trying to refashion its form on the wet sand, or dipping his own hand in color and pressing it on a stone, or trying to imitate the form of a running animal, began to talk with the others.

It was true that they could all see the moon and hands and running animals. But how could any one of them know whether the others saw exactly what he saw?

And then—someone comes upon the place where another man has drawn the moon. He looks at the drawing, and he sees the moon the way the other saw it! He feels like shouting with joy. Now, things are different: for one man has smashed the door between himself and another, opened the way to pass to the other!

And since that time, nothing has changed.

This, as far as I am concerned, is the only valid concept of what the philosophers call aesthetics: the possibility of talking to another being through a language of forms and colors. To say "beautiful" or "ugly" does not mean a thing. A thing is beautiful because it says something. A thing is ugly because it says nothing.

The rest does not matter. Further abstractions from this basic concept are useless. Useless maladies, derived from an archetypical world of Platonic ideas, so distant from life that they have no meaning for me.

Painting, then, is nothing but a means of expression, a means of understanding one another, and its validity depends on this possibility of communication.

An attempt to break the solitude.

When I feel well, when I feel at ease with someone, when a colloquy takes place between me and the other, when osmosis occurs, I "do" nothing. Or, to put it more precisely, I accomplish action. I don't make paintings. I don't have to.

All I have to do is to stretch out on a white rock in the black night. On a white rock in the midst of a valley. All I need is mountain peaks around: so black that they become empty and weightless.

And the night is warm and dry. And the rocks still hold the warmth of the sun. And during the day, the sun has burned up all the vapors of the earth.

Your right elbow barely touches the left elbow of the woman existing near you. Everything is perfect and simple.

It does not even matter whether you actually love the woman there at your side. Nor does it matter whether she loves you. It is enough that she exists and that you exist. It is enough to realize this existence together.

Love is a marvelous drug, if you want to try to break the solitude and pretend to exist together. But in reality you are still alone, alone as always.

Skin against skin means nothing. Even if you can't tell your own leg from that of the loved one, it still means

nothing. To touch the heart of the earth and the heart of the universe still means nothing. And still nothing, to have roots in the earth and branches in the sky.

Nor does love's ecstasy mean not to feel lonely.

But it is enough to stretch out on the white and warm rock and to watch the sky while your right elbow barely touches the left elbow of the woman who exists near you, to feel—at last—not alone.

To exist together!

You look at the sky. And time becomes so organic and you so enter into and are with time that you can really see the stars move. Your leg is pulled up, and the light of the young moon which has just risen casts its black shadow on the leg of the woman who exists near you, like the shadow of the style on a sun dial. But the shadow that moves does not mark the hours, because nothing is fixed and we move together with the shadow.

And space too becomes organic. Because space is no longer measurable, and you feel that the light of the dead star is on the march and is alive, and your breathing sketches a dance in the air. And finally, what men used to call feelings, used to call thoughts, instead of being kept within your breast, within your head, are now outside you. They wander about in space, they are with space, with all the feelings and all the thoughts of all men, of those who sleep or those who wake, of those being born or those who are dying. They are with the thoughts and feelings, even of Him who used to be called God.

Everything is in such perfect balance that when the rock makes your back ache and you gently turn on your right side, your smile meets the smile of the woman who exists near you. And the white and the black of her eyes are as big as the universe, and your eyes see only, as big as the universe, the face of the woman who exists at your side, and it appears more than beautiful, more than splendid, even more than sublime. Or perhaps less, if you wish. For it is not a matter of beauty or splendor or sublimity. The only thing that matters is truth, is not

to feel alone, is to exist together. So why try to cheat at the game? We must not cheat. If one could exist, really exist forever and all the time, then painting would be nothing but a coarse joke!

But, then, what does painting really mean to me? Why do I go on painting, still making pictures? I paint them because I am still alone, and not capable of integrated acts every minute of the day.

I also know that painting is no longer a symbol of perfection but a demonstration of my imperfection; which means that my acts are not yet accomplished.

I am at the seashore for a rest. There are hundreds of people around me. Their voices reach my ear blurred and confused: a sort of muffled and formless bellowing. Once in a while the high-pitched cries of children project above it. For whom, in this crowd of people, do I paint?

This is the public. Where is the colloquy that should take place between me and them?

At a time when the artist was a genius and the rest were just poor devils, this separation did not matter. What's more, in spite of everything, there was then some sort of stronger link between the two parties.

But today, can I really afford to disregard the "others," today when I am no longer a genius and they are no longer poor devils?

I might say then that I paint to attest my existence, that I cast, on the canvas or on the wooden board, slices of my life. Life, such as it is—even at this moment when I am writing.

True enough, I'd rather write than waste my existence as so many others do. But just imagine what would happen if all these people here suddenly realized that they exist. Imagine what a panic of joy would break loose on this sea-side sun-scorched beach!

But I must put the problem in exact terms:

What it comes down to is this: the relationship be-

tween myself and the others; the relationship between myself and painting.

There is one of the "others" here across from me. Sitting at a table. Just like me, he is bored with lying on his belly and writing on the sand. Let us assume for a moment that I wish to communicate with this "other." Since I am not able to break the solitude, I want to paint a picture.

If I were not an imbecile, if I were truly genuine and used to being simply natural, I would look at the "other." Then I would give him a smile. Nothing else. But I am armored with solitude. So, in front of me there is a white page and on this white page there are just some strange pen-strokes—that sort of miracle, strokes which signify, for good or for evil.

Miracle, I said. But not in the ecclesiastical sense. Miracle means: a thing to behold.

Who is the "other" across from me? A young woman? Or a child? Or an old man? Because it is very important to know who the "other" is. Or else we are not human beings but merely abstractions.

Let us assume first that it is a child. I want to make something for him. What could I make for him, to please him, to tell him that for me he really exists? Shall I make him a picture? But what would that mean to him? Ridiculous!

Play. Play together. That is the only possible thing to do.

But let us assume that I am unable to. Let us assume that I get up from my chair and walk over to him, that I stroke his head and take his hand. And we go together down to the sea to look for shells. And he is happy. But then, suppose, his mother gets up, walks over, looks at me with reproachful eyes, and, without saying a word, takes the child by his hand and pulls him away. The child cries. He screams. His scream projects sharply above the muffled and formless bellowing of the crowd.

I remain alone, sitting on the sand, my feet in the



water. What is there to say now? What could I possibly paint for this child?

Perhaps I should think of his everyday life. As he goes to school. I should calculate the exact space he traverses on his way from home to school. Sometimes alone. Often with his little schoolmates. If I think of these things, then I would and could paint—if you still want to call that painting.

But really it is no longer painting.

There. The child is still in bed. I have just come in to wake him. He is sleeping with his toy rabbit in his arms. The rabbit, by now, is a bit worn and shabby.

Outside the sun is shining. A splended October sun. In a little while he will go to school. He will have to walk from his home to school.

There are so many ways from home to school!

There is the way to school out in the country, a way made of seasons, meadows, and cows. There is the way to school in the fine big city, made of broad squares, baroque fountains, shops, and fast cars. There is the way to school in the industrial suburbs, a way made of smoke, sadness, and squalor. And thus there is bound to be, in the near future, somewhere, the way to school of Anonymous (20th Century).

All these routes to school may vary in length, in form, in degree of authenticity. But there is not one that really corresponds to our existence as modern men, or, in this particular case, to their existence as modern children.

Some routes to school are ugly, some are pretty, but the impressions that the child receives on his way to school are in any case wrong and behind the times.

It would seem as though nobody really ever thought of the child.

In the countryside, the way to school is the most natural. But it still resembles the way of savage, primitive children. True, it offers some vital sensations. But they are still those of an earth without human life. Does it

contain any part of our life of today? It is wholesome. But where is the tension of a mankind that is trying to overcome the earth's gravitational forces? There are trees. Bare trees with ice and snow, flowering trees under spring rains, green trees under an implacable summer sun, yellow and red trees in autumn mists. But what kind of world does this way convey to the child, unless it be the savage and tyrannical world still made up of nature alone?

The way to school in the fine big city is richer in aesthetic impressions. Man is there. But it is a man of former times. On his way, the child is oppressed by the stone mass of the church with its ungraspable mystic powers; the palace crushes him with its brutal civil power. Even the fountains are fountains not of water, but of symbols, of masks, and their water does not come from the earth. Corroding myths, like subtle poisons, infiltrate the life blood of this elegantly dressed little child, with his bow tie, who walks to school in this "better" part of town. They clog the pores of his skin. He is already a slave.

Out in the industrial suburbs, the way to school is sad. But perhaps it is the most modern and truthful one. It is made of human tragedy. If the human condition today is tragedy, then this way is the most modern and truthful. The child will at least learn rebellion along this route. But why must we let a child live in this inferno, face to face with tragedy? Tenderness, motherly tenderness arises in even a father, tenderness for this child who walks to school as though in a postwar realistic film, himself a son of this war; war which today may drop bombs, tomorrow perhaps only words of hatred and partisanship, but which remains always war, whether cold or hot.

But why do we not think of the children?

Why do we not think of the way each of them has to walk from home to school?

It would be enough to think of it, really to think of it, and things would get going by themselves. Then it would be worthwhile to be an architect, or in this case, a painter. Then this way to school would become something really vital.

To carry the sea to where there is nothing but arid plain.  
To carry the mountains to where there is only sea.  
To carry the sun to where there is only a dark valley.  
That the child's foot may know that the earth is made  
of earth.

That the child's eye may know that the sky is made of  
sky.

Rocks, water, grass, colors!

Mountain walls rise against the wind from the north.

And rivers ripple playfully against the parched summers.

Carpets of color are spread against winter's cold.

Color-crystals emerge from the snows!

Mineral flowers, where today the sun sings the grass!

A stone wheel round the holly, and now we go round  
the mulberry bush!

New forms, new materials.

Free, liberated in space.

And painting, transformed from museum pieces into  
objects of life.

What used to be called painting has become relation-  
ship with things.

This is truth! This means really to be a painter.

And as painter, to feel that one is part of, that one  
belongs to, society.

My mind turns back to the child on the beach. He  
walks with me on this new way to school. We are alive  
and together!

The same things would happen if the "other" had been  
that young woman over there. Or this pain-racked old  
man. Or all the "others."

I don't know whether you have understood what I  
mean. I don't know whether I have been clear. Whether  
I have put the problem in exact terms. Part one. The  
relationship between myself and the "others."

Enthusiasts will say it is stupendous.

Pessimists may say that it is just a lot of words.

The rationalist will say that I am romantic.

The romantic, perhaps, will say that I am cracked.

And yet to me, everything seems clear, obvious.

The practical man, perhaps will say: "O.K., Ricci, let's have a convention on this topic. And you prepare the agenda."

Agenda! Agenda!

Haven't they understood that what matters, at last, is to live, and not to classify and catalogue?

O.K., O.K., I shall try. I shall do my best.

Let's get going. Agenda for tomorrow morning's meeting. The topic: Relationship between the painter and the "others." Points on the agenda:

Point one: The end of easel painting and studio sculpturing. Even if they were masterpieces of incalculable and ever-rising value in the art market, paintings destined to be embalmed in some museum or in a collector's apartment no longer make any sense at all.

Point two: The re-integration of the artist into life. The painter must belong to society. He must give useful objects to all, objects suited to enhancing man's vitality.

Point three: The integration of painting and sculpture with architecture and town planning. This integration must take place in a creative sense and must begin with town planning, not in a decorative sense as—in the best of hypotheses—is happening today.

And miscellaneous.

This would be my agenda, whatever it's worth. Certainly I am no specialist. Perhaps it would have been better to go to some friend and ask for help. I have so many architect and painter friends who are specialists in "agendas"!

But let us return to our problems. Let us come now to Part II: the relationship between myself and painting.

After an absence of two months I have returned to my home in Florence. Here, on the hill. On top of this magnificent hill. Right now I am in my study. The study is empty. On the ground floor, in direct contact with a natural rock cave, is my architectural study. Above, like the

top part of a duplex, is the studio where I do my painting.

For more than an hour I have been wandering up and down through the two studies. The architectural study is empty. Five drawing boards, with nobody at them. This afternoon my assistants will repopulate the room. Now it is empty and sad. But this is just a passing thing.

Upstairs, where I do my painting, it is a ghastly mess. A boundless desolation. Paintings and paintings. Years of work, of struggle, of suffering heaped one on top of the other, senselessly. They might be masterpieces! All masterpieces! Stuff worth a hundred thousand dollars each! Instead of being mine, they could have been painted by the greatest living painters. My feeling toward them would not change: a haunting feeling of uselessness, of old stuff rummaged out of granny's attic, hangs in the air. Why? For whom?

No getting round it. Even if he were the greatest painter the earth has ever seen since man began to express himself in painting, a painter today is indeed a poor wretch, a displaced person, without roots, without society, alone like a dog in that world of his own that does not really interest anybody.

It's true. I might as well get up from this chair, turn around one of the paintings I used to love most. Look at it for a long time. Let myself be immersed in it and forget the rest. Enter into this world *per se* as though I were visiting a new, only recently discovered, planet; and feel contented, satisfied, perhaps even happy.

Suppose some people walked in right now—people who knew what it is all about, sensitive people who understood the new idiom of painting—perhaps we should walk together on this new planet, overwhelmed by the discovery, filled with this new reality which is besieging the gates of a mankind unwilling to see.

Perhaps, in this way we should enter a kind of paradise, or, if you prefer, an inferno, where men would feel alive among men.

A meager consolation. Nothing but narcissism, first individual, then collective.

Turn the painting back toward the wall, and it's all over. All that remains is pieces of board and messy canvases. Junk. Junkman, junkman! Who has rubbish for sale!

If I heard him shout now, out in the garden, the way he shouts through the city streets, in a blue moment like this I might sell him all this stuff for a few lire. What sense does it make anyway?

I might also burn it up, burn the whole lot to ashes.

Get rid of everything once and for all and become a plain ordinary man again, without false pretenses.

At this moment I raise my eyes and look outside. Out into the sunlight of this splendid early October day, swept by the rhythmic gusts of a powerful north wind that seems more clearly to mark the outlines of all things: houses, trees, towers.

I look out and see across from me the façade of the *Badia* of San Domenico.

A crust of white and green marble on a wall of stone. As simple as that; and not even finished.

A basically unimportant thing, almost academic, a thing made naturally, perhaps just out of habit, so clear was style at that time. If I think of my intellectual efforts when I make a painting, that façade appears to me a naïve thing, a childish thing. And yet it is alive. It lives in the sun. It is truthful. It lives for all. For all those who pass by while my paintings here in this room are dead; made for the initiated, they lack the truthfulness of everyday life. Junk for the rummage sale.

And yet—outside the wind blows. When the wind blows and you would like to be in the sun, a wall against the wind would come in handy. A living wall of glass set in stone, in steel, a wall that is teeming with life and which would serve me, my wife and my children, my friends, and whoever else wants to stay in the sun when the wind blows, sheltered by a living wall.

In this sense the mosaic that I made on the roof of the garage is also all right; it is alive. It is a simple thing, maybe decorative, without great pretensions; but there it is, lit up by the sun, seeming to consist of mineral flowers to play in spring and summer with the real flowers; and in the barren winters to gladden the heart by reminding us that, in the world, there is light, there is color, there is life.

It's useless. What I have been thinking for years is true. What I said by the sea, in this very chapter, is true. The notes for the "agenda" are true. What I have been saying today is just as true. This painting on easels in a studio must be given up. The painter must be re-integrated into life, he must become again a tool of life. We must leave our studios, our ivory towers, our temples, and roam the streets, again, roam among the people and give them what we can, what once used to be called by various names: poetry or whatever. Yes, we must sell everybody our poetry, if that is what you want to call it, the way others sell ice cream and shoes. We must make our pictures—which will be pictures no longer—the way others make automobiles and planes. But the others must help us.

Our politicians, above all, must understand that there still exists—even though in a different form—such a thing as was once called beauty. They must understand that painters can really be useful, especially in a period which tries to give bread and butter to every man, but without the "savor" that we know better and are in a better position to give. They must trust us again; they must understand at last that, without us, they cannot create a society, but merely a herd of human beings who are more or less evolved, more or less intelligent, more or less rich, but who are basically incapable of living and enjoying life.

If I look at my paintings now, then indeed I feel at ease with myself. Because I understand that, after all, they are nothing but experiences, just sketches of the

real things that will live with the cities we shall make, with the houses we shall make, with the gardens we shall make.

Nothing but sketches. But out in the open air they live. They are alive in space, those new "form colors," which will heighten the meaning of men's lives, wherever they need it and in the way in which they need it.

No longer painting-opinion, painting-comment. No longer painting enslaved to an idea. No longer painting-propaganda. Nor painting-experiment. No. This is painting as an act. Painting as living. Like breathing, eating. Painting as loving. Painting as creation, emancipated and free.

Painting that has become object. That functions as object. The object of Anonymous (20th Century).

I think, I hope, I fervently wish, that what I have tried to say here may convey to the reader the idea that we painters, or at least some of us, are serious people, people who risk their skins for what they are doing; unfortunate people, who suffer from feeling useless and dead in this society, but who in reality are alive, ready to start up and make things that are useful and organic in the lives of all men.

This is no time for joking. This is a grim fight. We live in a world in which the artist has been disqualified!

He has been tracked down, he has been starved. Society is afraid of him. It feels he represents anarchy, the forces of darkness, evil. But he is nothing of the sort.

The true artist is a man who tries to live. Life, as it is now, is worth nothing to him. His real problem—of which he may be more or less conscious—can be stated in simple terms: "Is life worth living?"

If so, everything is all right. If not, there's your gun. Better so. But since it is frightening to shoot oneself, or troublesome for other people, suicide is ruled out. The artist continues to try to live as best he can.

This is the reason why they all take to drugs, either



physical or spiritual. This is the reason why so many of them escape from reality and run for cover in the dreams of poetry.

This is why they don their coats of mail or lock themselves in their ivory towers, or do so many things which in one way or another current morality considers bad.

This is why they go wrong, or why so many of them have become crooks and fakes, if you want to use such terms.

But the genuine reality is different.

It is impossible to live in a world that swings between an unknown, metaphysical God, beyond death, and an earth of fattened hogs or seven-pound ears of corn.

No, it is simply impossible to live this way. To be an artist means to put oneself somehow at the disposal of existence, means to exist.

The artist is the ever-readiness of childhood, the memory of a paradise lost, the drive toward adventure and discovery, the possibility of having eyes that see, noses that smell, hands that touch, palates that taste.

Senses, senses open to life in all its possible aspects so as to know life and grasp its meaning.

You may cheat us, all of us, but then you'll be cheating yourselves too, out of your own childhood, your own lost paradise, your own adventures and discoveries; you'll be cheating yourselves into the lives of fattened capons, into lives abounding in scientifically calculated vitamins.

Give back to the artist the possibility of being useful and integrated into society, and you will see that you will get honest products, genuine, useful, and well-made products. You will see that an end will be put to all those absurd, pseudo-cultural polemics between "realism" and "abstractionism," or among the various schools of abstractionism as to which is the true one. You will see that it will no longer be a problem whether painters are going to return to figurative painting, or whether they will go on with abstract painting.

And it will no longer be necessary for some more or

less intelligent collector or some more or less capable art merchant to save artists from starvation, then to heap absurd amounts of money on them in order to make still more themselves. Nor shall we need any longer the false patronage of the state, which, proffering alms in the elegant guise of prizes and awards, wants to give the impression that it is interested in culture.

There will no longer be any need for all these lies and falsehoods and mistaken ambitions.

The artist will once more be a man like any other. A special type of man, perhaps, who—owing to some slight variation in his nervous system or to a minor abnormality of excess or insufficiency in his endocrine glands—is better equipped than others to dominate the world of textures and colors; whose imagination is better prepared than others' to create new and vital spaces; who can transform inert lifeless matter into objects capable of arousing vital and useful sensations in men, of enriching the lives of others. Nothing more.

Thus the artist, after all, is not different from the farmer who sows the corn, the shoemaker who skillfully makes a pair of shoes, the physicist who discovers new sources of energy, the biologist who finds new remedies against old ailments.

This is what we want, nothing more. This is all we are waiting for. But, whatever the price, we cannot abdicate from this, our function; it is as vital as daily bread, because it contains in itself the meaning of life and the justification of life.

# 9

## Notes after a Convention on Town Planning

These notes were written in 1957, at the end of a convention on town planning. During that convention I suffered deeply. I was aware of an error at its very basis. I was aware that the solution of our crisis could not come from congresses of that kind, even though they might be of some use as forums for political and social discussions. But they can never create the possibility for a really new opening.

I wrote these pages, therefore, that night in my hotel room and the next morning sitting in my car when I pulled off the highway between Bologna and Florence. They are the foundation, the substratum, the very act of experience of what I believe today. I should like to attest, through them, to what can be the inner reactions of an architect to certain official situations, to himself, and to his own work. If this book has any value, I owe some gratitude, after all, even to that convention.

Once upon a time there was a house standing on a hill. Its farm was around it, and the olive trees grew olives which were made into oil. Today the house is ruined inside, divided into many gloomy little dens and added outdoor conveniences. Where there was life, light, and poetry, there is now only squalor and destitution. The trees grow dwarfish olives, which nobody even bothers to gather. But the façade must be conserved, and so must the

olive trees, as if they constituted a picture, though nobody cares whether it is alive. The crumbling walls and the falling plaster are "colorful," and the olive trees stand there, alive, as if they were decorative elements, like chrysanthemums or palms.

All this saddens me deeply.

Once upon a time there was a street, and the street led to a little square, with a church at the center. Workshops opened on to the street. Craftsmen were busy, talking, and bargaining: it was all alive.

People went to church for matins and vespers. On Sundays the square was a common living room for all. Today the workshops are smelly storehouses. Behind a screen of "picturesqueness" men's lives are undermined by tuberculosis, the street is crowded with cars, making an infernal noise. Pedestrians huddle against the broken-plastered walls as though dodging gunfire. The square has been transformed into a parking lot. The church is deserted, except for a forlorn priest, lean or fat as may be, praying, perhaps, or simply weeping over the miseries of this world, or, more likely still, not thinking about anything at all, just there, wrapped in his black cassock. On Sunday mornings, a few bigoted old women, saying their rosaries, keep him company.

Then, at a convention on town planning, they show projections of colored photographs of that street, flanked by those rotting smelly houses, with the square in the background, and the church. And they say: this ought to be preserved, because it is "beautiful."

Some of the town planners are so moved by their aesthetic feeling that they have tears in their eyes; but, needless to say, they don't have to live there.

Others, more realistic and clever, come forward and say: "Surely it can't go on like this; let's do something about it: let's renovate the place; let's introduce plumbing, refrigerators, and dish-washing machines, so far as the interior is concerned; but let's leave the exterior as it is!"

Now either I am crazy or they are. There is no other possibility.

There are certain famous and honored urbanists, endowed with particular magic virtues. They have dozens and dozens of plans to make, for all parts of the world. They arrive in the city that is to be planned, very tired from an uncomfortable trip. The authorities are waiting for them at the station, the way the crowds wait for a celebrity, whether a football hero, movie star, or cyclist. There are smiles, compliments, and bows. The urbanist takes a little rest at his hotel. Then he is taken out for luncheon like a court jester, he makes some witty remark, he is entertaining. At least that is what it looks like, because they are all laughing.

In the afternoon there is a conference. Big applause. "He said . . ." Then he leaves. After three months he is back. The city happens to be on the way to another place he was to visit. It is almost time for luncheon. He has to eat, after all. "Come to think of it, I might just as well stop here. I have to prepare the plan for this town. Let's have a look at it." He drives around the town. He gets back to his hotel. In the evening he leaves. On the train, he keeps thinking of the town before falling asleep in his compartment. He's got it all down pat.

After four or five sessions of this sort (or a few more, if the city is very big), the plan is ready. On a sheet of paper, nicely framed, like an abstract painting. You see little rings, and lines of various colors and thickness. Beautiful! As you look more closely, you find some descriptive text: "historical center," "restricted area," "managerial area," "residential area": height, three stories, four stories, two stories. And so on. Nobody knows who the people are who actually live within the historical center, or at the periphery, or in the "satellite town." Or, rather, one does know—men who belong to different sub-species: those who live downtown, those who live at the periphery, or those who own little villas in the residential sections (scale of 1:10). As though they were different races. The

monkeys here, the cats, there; over there, the ants; in that other section, the pedigreed dogs. It does not matter which: everything is fine. The city has been "planned." Applause. I should envy these thaumaturgical personalities, were it not for the fact that my heart shrinks, at night, when I go to bed. There have been nights when, I swear to you, I have wept over all this. But I didn't tell anybody: certainly not.

They have told me that I am a romantic. That you can't go on like this today. That there is some truth in what I say, but that you can't stop at this level of discussion. But I am neither a romantic nor a classicist. These, it seems to me, are old words. I am someone who tries to live, that's all. But I don't understand the laws. Maybe they'll lock me up some day, because even though I have read the paper I did not notice that there was some new law or other making obligatory something I failed to do.

I am neither a lawyer nor a politician nor a public functionary. I am only an architect. Or at least that is what I try to be, in spite of a diploma, two professorships, and fifteen years of practical experience. The problem for me consists only of land, building materials, space, and forms. If the client is a family, I try to make that family as happy as possible. If they are tenants in a tenement house, I try, within the limits of the means at my disposal, to see to it as best I can that the tenants live as well as possible, within those spaces, in contact with those trees, and with these few objects around: when they climb those stairs, when they sleep, when they eat. And at this point I am already aware that the limits are getting beyond me, and the problem is becoming so enormous that it frightens me, that the client is beginning to become abstract. I no longer see the faces of the people, of the individual people, who are to live there. The reality of the others begins to elude me, and I fall into emptiness. I cannot love these people any longer: they become like ants to me, or worse yet, like robots, without heart,

without blood. The feeling of discomfort is such, at times, that it frightens me and I feel like screaming.

But they say that I am a romantic, and that you can't be like that today. You have got to be hard-boiled, and take reality the way it is.

And I despise myself. I often tell myself that I am a crook and that I just can't go on like that. Because at times it really seems that the others are right. Then I make an effort. I throw myself into "life." I go and talk to the lawyers, I try to enter the business world, I attend conventions, and what not. And sometimes I am aware that I am fascinating to some extent, that I have a grip on "life," and that, perhaps, the others *are* right.

But at night, when I go to bed and look up, through that square hole I have broken through the wall so as to be able to see the sky and the stars, I am disgusted with myself. And if my wife were not there, next to me, and I could not smile at her, and hold her tight, and feel her heart, blood, and breath—feel, that is, that there is something alive—I assure you that sometimes I should go out of my mind. I don't know how these other fellows do it.

It must be glory or ambition or some other druglike stuff that blunts their conscience, or else their state of mind could not be so different from mine.

I have never believed in absolute values. Especially not when you deal with those of architecture, which change and transform themselves along with life. And those concepts of absolute values in art seem to me rhetorical and mistaken. An object of art, it seems to me, changes its value as life changes. But if the value of an object changes, this does not mean that the object has no longer any value at all. If, for example, in a picture by Giotto, certain values which it possessed in the past are no longer of any interest to the spectator of today—narrative values, values of religious subject matter, etc.—that does not mean that modern man should take that picture and throw it away. Other values remain: values of culture and

costume on the one hand, pictorial and plastic values on the other. A part, that is, remains valid historically, another part remains alive, remains useful even to modern painters for the creation of new forms of expression. It would be absurd to want to crystallize them in time. Can I give the same value to the same painting if for instance I no longer kneel in front of the Madonna it represents to pray to her in expectation of a token of grace? But in front of the same Madonna I may think and live other situations. That object, in other words, may be alive for me, even though in a different way.

And so it is with the city. Churches, palaces of kings and lords, and thousands more of ancient values, no longer serve us. They have changed, become other. To crystallize them, to leave them the way they are, would be tantamount to forcing people of today to live in another time. Since this is impossible, all that would remain would be a soulless organism without meaning, where people disguised in costumes would recite roles whose meaning and reality totally escaped them.

This morning the sun is particularly bright. Perhaps this is the effect of the pall of fog that covers the city of Florence. Here, from on high, I like to imagine her as a city of gold. I say "gold" symbolically. I like to think of her as a happy city. A city made by us and belonging to us. With new spaces that belong to us. And the geographical configuration is such that it seems to be made to order for such a city. But then the fog lifts and Florence appears such as she is. A magnificent city, certainly. And still ours. Thus, seen from on high. It seems to me that there is no conflict between the two cities, the imagined city and the real one.

Especially now, when mankind should not live according to concepts and myths, but only according to existential relations. And it would seem logical and right to me to conduct our colloquy with the ancient city. To create relationships until this city really becomes "our city."



But they say that I am an artist. And they say it disparagingly, too.

Apropos of artists. There are various ways of examining the world. There is the scientific, there is the philosophical, and there is the artistic way. All of them together make up human consciousness. All of them together mark the level of human civilization.

I can't understand why today, of all times—just when it seems most urgently needed—the artistic way of examining the world tends to disappear. And why those who ought to use it are fighting it.

This is what is happening today—at a moment which is illuminated by the most sublime scientific discoveries, but in which the solitude of man has become most forbidding, and the absurd holds absolute sway over our lives. Necessity: take it or leave it. Most people are strangers to one another anyway. Just look. A scientist in his laboratory. He seems a gigantic Doctor Faust. Then he leaves his laboratory. Forlorn, he wanders through the streets. He does not even look around. He seems scared. Perhaps his wife is ugly. But perhaps she is beautiful. He, too, is alone. Alone with his ghosts. And he is not happy.

I look out through the window. The man-made satellites gyrating around the earth do not impress me. It's so simple, after all, child's play. My son shoots a stone up with his sling, and the stone falls back to earth. If he had more strength, the stone would not fall right away; it would become a satellite. Now man has invented a bigger and better sling, and the stone keeps revolving around the earth.

But if I take a stone into my hand and look at it, and, when it is night, I feel that it is cold, and, by day, I feel the sun-heat in it, I say: the stone-in-itself does not exist; because there is this stone without sun and this stone with sun. And this seems to me far more important than the satellites. It is a deeper thing; a more mysterious and more genuine truth. And when I, as an architect, move

spaces in which the life of things can create relations among themselves; when I use materials which live their existence with the existence of human beings; when I make forms that speak to the inhabitants of the building of the accustomed things of this world, but in a new way: then it seems to me that the artistic way of examining the world must still be valid and vital, and that I am a social being.

Because the artist changes. There have been slave artists and court buffoons, long-haired and ragged artists, and artists in silk clothes and feathered hats. That depends on the changing fashion and the changing fortune and esteem that the artist has enjoyed at different times.

Perhaps there will no longer be any need for art in the future. I myself rather think so. Man will live, only live; because he will have learned to live. But then we shall have arrived at a new earthly Paradise. Today, in the context of the history of our day, the artist must not die.

And yet, many people today all over the world have a certain demagogical prejudice against the artist: against the artist-architect, in favor, perhaps, of the constructor-architect or of the sociologist-architect.

Even if under certain aspects this attitude may seem ethically correct, implying as it does a condemnation of the antiquated figure of the genius-artist (which I too am combating), it is really not acceptable. Because to be an artist does not mean anything extraordinary. It means simply to face existence in a special way.

And if it is true, as I believe, that this dualistic world, split between the physical and the metaphysical aspects of man, is finished, then it is also true that the artist is today more necessary than ever. For indeed it has been the historical function of the artist to try to bridge these two worlds. The artist has never attested to metaphysical and physical truths, as the founders of religions, or philosophers, scientists, or statesmen have done.

The artist's task has been different. All he has done is to create relations. And there has been leeway for all;

there has been freedom for all. At least as far as the reading, the interpretation, the possibility of receiving were concerned. The artist has never tried to explain the world; only to make it more conscious, more alive, more acceptable. And what more do we want than a more vital earth, that should give us more joy and the possibility of enlarging our existence?

And with all that, should people be afraid of artists?

Once upon a time, a city was all one house. It even had its walls and its gates. And at night the gates were closed. The enemies and the foreigners stayed outside. Then people razed the walls, and the gates remained there, meaningless monuments. And the city went to pieces.

A measure has been lost, certainly. But if the razing of the walls should mean that outside there are no longer enemies and foreigners, if it should mean that the city has become something open that lives in relation to all the things of all men, if it should mean that the whole earth has become one single house, then blessed be this destruction. And don't be afraid: we won't destroy the churches, or the palaces, or the monuments.

The earth is so wide. There is room for them too. But they must become things that truly belong to *us*: new things.

There was one man at the town-planning convention who, pointing to a townscaping project, said: "Here, gentlemen, we'll put the new housing projects behind the ridge of the hills, so they won't spoil the view." And then he added: "Furthermore, there it is sunnier."

I let it pass, on account of the sun. If people really lived better in that place, that would be the place to build. But it is this "behind" that gives me the creeps. To this point has human dignity been debased today.

To live there, behind: because we have to be ashamed of ourselves; and we may not disturb what our remote

ancestors have built. And yet, they too were assassins, and they kept slaves.

And an outstanding town planner added this comment: "That's what ought to be done! That's true humility!"

For me, these people are traitors.

The English garden-cities are often held up by our town planners as models to imitate.

In support of their thesis, these planners are capable of adding phrases of this sort: "How beautiful the green lawns are, and how sweet the song of the little birds!"

Historians of the present, let's keep things straight.

As a critic, I may even agree that these housing projects represent the most up-to-date, and perhaps the best example of building in an organized society, especially from the socio-economic point of view.

I can point them out as exemplifying one way of life.

But I cannot imitate them. God help and save us. In the first place, there is no architecture. Second, these places are permeated by boredom and anonymity. Third, statistics show that the number of suicides and cases of insanity in this type of Nordic city is the highest in the world. Fourth, if you come home at night and forget your house number—as once actually happened to me—you have to spend the night on the street, because it is impossible to tell one house from the other; or else you have to return to the city to pass your time at a nightclub, or to sleep in a hotel. Fifth, human relations among the inhabitants are nil; often they don't even know one another. Sixth, those famous green lawns would be scorched by the Italian sun. Seventh, and speaking in sociological terms, this form of life pertains to some species of capitalists who make these houses "comfortable" so that the workers may work more efficiently after a good relaxation. But don't speak of happiness in this situation. More power to the Neapolitan fisherman, if you compare his type of life with this; I'd rather go begging than end up in one of those garden-cities!

This morning I went to the construction site. At my feet, there stretched away a slope, formed of boulders, as in the marble quarries. Since it is a holiday, there were no workers. Because of the low fog that muffled sounds, the silence was absolute save for an occasional creak in the stone mass. The pressure of the setting weight kept displacing here and there little stones which rolled a few inches down the hill.

Looking intently and concentrating my view on one single point, it seemed to me that I saw and heard the whole gravel mass "descend" into the valley, like an enormous beast of a thousand scales.

I was totally aware of the gravitational force that pulls us toward the center of the earth as though this center were a living thing.

If architects, including myself, were always fully aware of this force while projecting and executing their works, their buildings would be stupendous as never before. The great temple at Paestum, in comparison, would be nothing.

Planning. It is not a question of being in favor or against planning. This is what I said the other night at dinner with some architect friends: "Take, for example, a scalpel. It is only an instrument that serves for operations. Everything depends on how you use it. If a great surgeon uses it, the patient recovers. If a quack uses it, the patient dies."

And so it is with the city. It is not a matter of being in favor of or against the tool constituted by the regulatory plan. What matters is who uses it. It is not only that, but the way of using it, that matters.

If the so-called "regulatory plan" were an act of creation, such a plan would be welcome. But, you see, the name itself betrays the true meaning. It is "regulation," and regulation is born where life fails.

And if it were, at least, an "ordinative plan": a principle of order in the midst of chaos.

But the right thing would be a town-creating plan.

And creating not once and for ever. Because the elements of creation keep changing.

Or let some philologist propose a new name. I am not going to steal anybody's job.

On the housing project. In all these latest conventions they kept talking of planning on the communal, intercommunal, even regional level.

They never talked of the individual housing project.

This indicates the dictatorial nature of planning. I don't ask for a discussion of the single elements that make up a city: homes, schools, markets, factories, and so on. But the housing project, the neighborhood should be taken into serious consideration. I mean the nucleus that should contain within itself all the elements of individual and social daily life. This really seems to me the important thing.

I have used the word neighborhood even though I believe that in the future, in the open city, there will no longer be such a thing, which still belongs to the closed city. But I had to use this term in order to make it clear that, if we want to create a city that is to be really ours, we must first analyze and know, apart from any rhetoric, which are today the true values that establish relationships among men: relationships that in the past were so clearly expressed in the "neighborhood."

A housing project is born. Here there used to be a hill. And on this hill there were some old abandoned quarries. There were no trees, no houses, no road. Only a mass of gravel, covered here and there with briar patches. A shrub of broom, here and there: the only tokens of life. I wanted to make myself a house. And I had looked for a site, on the hills girding Florence, for months on end. This was the place I liked. But it was so squalid that my wife was almost frightened.

For me, it was a very special place. Leonardo da Vinci must have spent a lot of time there. It seemed to me he made some of his drawings sitting on this land.

And then there were a thousand other things that I need not explain. Secret and intimate things.

The fact is that I wanted to build.

I began building a little road. Old Gino, the cart driver up there, did the digging. We carried the water up on muleback. I had to start. I had to detach my head from my shoulders and carry it in front of me in my right hand like a lantern.

Or else I should have lost my courage.

The house was built. And I saw that I lived well in it, with my wife and children.

At that moment chance intervened, or fortune.

The house was a novelty. Therefore lots of people came to see it. And others wanted to build houses there.

For me it was an important moment.

If my house had remained the only one, it would have remained an isolated, aristocratic, intellectual fact, even if it had been a masterpiece. An aesthetic caprice, after all. Just like any other of those exceptional villas you find in this world, here and there.

But if other people too wanted houses like this, it meant to me that there existed a minimum common denominator. A group, a society was being born. The life of a village in miniature.

Today there are eighteen houses. Soon there will be twenty.

All sorts of people from every possible country come to visit this village. It has been publicized in all sorts of periodicals. Even the bus drivers know it, and when they pass by on the road below, they point out to their passengers these houses of the "Martians."

Facing my village is Fiesole, the Etruscan. At its feet, Florence, the Roman, Romanesque and Humanist. Here, instead, are the houses of the Martians. At dawn the sun shines equally on the Etruscan era, on the Roman, the Romanesque, on the Humanistic era, and on the year 2000. By now they live together.

In order to be able to build, you have to struggle hard.

With the superintendents and with the municipality. They make you spit blood. But after all I should be grateful even to them. In spite of all they put me through.

And I hope to go on. My village still lacks certain elements, like a school and shops.

This is not supposed to be a New Thebes, nor is it for privileged people. And yet life here is different from what it is in other places.

Life takes its course as it does anywhere else. As anywhere else, there is joy and there is suffering. Yet at night we are able to see the stars.

And for the children this is a paradise on earth.

And all this is achieved with the most modest means. Local rock, iron fixtures, plaster, and glass. At a price not exceeding that of a low-cost housing project.

The fact is that these houses are familiar with the earth on which they were born. And I have lived with them, day after day.

It is not a question of beauty; it is a question of truth even if, once in a while, the rain filters in through the roof.

So, step by step, life goes on. Today you plant a pine tree, tomorrow a tulip bulb.

Now I ask myself: what would have happened if, without knowing anything about this piece of earth, I had made an abstract housing project prescribing heights and volumes without taking into account the needs of the inhabitants?

I should have destroyed this landscape with meaningless things: things that might at best be "beautiful," but not truthful.

Today I should be sad over the ruined hill. And I should have to run away from here.

This is why I find certain types of abstract planning simply absurd.

I always hoped, and am still hoping, that the day will come when I shall be able to carry out a complete housing project by these same methods.



All by myself, helped only by my assistants, I had started on one.

A famous town planner stopped my work.

In cooperation with other groups of architects we started on another one. In that case too, town planners and aesthetes stepped in.

And to think that we had lavished such love on the fulfillment of these two actions. And we were familiar with the earth where those houses should have been born. I was already dreaming of the marvelous trenches to contain the foundations. And the taut ropes to align the streets and walls.

And the inhabitants, especially of the second housing project, would have been humble people. People who use their bathtubs to grow tomatoes. Yet those people would have lived there in a new, simple, open, happy way.

But let bygones be bygones. Maybe nothing can be done any longer. And even if something could still be done, something, I am afraid, has changed. That naturalness is gone: that almost childish joy at planning. Even if something were to be done, we should have lost, at any rate, a good deal of our ingenuousness. We should know that "others" would stand by to spy on us, their pistols loaded, ready to jump on us and to shout that they were right.

Whatever happens, it certainly is a pity. And if we did not carry within ourselves the certainty that life is stronger than all of us, we might all easily become skeptics and defeatists: people without hope. And without hope it's impossible to be an architect.

There are days when a subtle malaise gets hold of me. A state of anxiety envelops me like a deep-sea diver's outfit. This is caused by the sight of the Earth being ruined.

It's strange. The Earth appears to me like a living creature. Alive and all of one piece, like a plant or a child. And to see it mutilated, violated, disfigured, gives me physical pain. Because I want all of us together to feel this sensation of belonging to the Earth. I want all of us to

grasp the value of this One House that shelters us all, all of us to be aware of the collective importance of each of our individual acts.

It seems to me that if this awareness were shared by all, and especially by those who build houses, bridges, roads, or whatever, the Earth would soon turn into an Earthly Paradise. And it would need no town planners. There would no longer be two sides of the barricade: neither the Army of the Vandals, nor the Salvation Army.

It would be a natural everyday fact.

There would no longer be those outskirts, with those ghastly houses: absurd and inhuman houses, with the trains passing in the rear, with all the misery exposed in the windows.

The trouble is that when people see ugly things, most of them gloat. It's always the others that are wrong: the civic engineering corps, perhaps, or the officials of the municipality, or the whole lot of geometers and petty engineers. And if they are architects, or, better still, famous architects, then the inner satisfaction over the mistake of the others reaches sublime peaks. Something like grandmother's cordial, when we were children, plus the holy fire of a good glass of whisky or vodka.

I, instead, succumb to utter sadness. Especially when I see those erring in whom we believed when we were young.

Let there be no misunderstanding. I am not invaded by the spirit of charity, or bathed in divine grace, like a saint. Far from it. I am burning. Burning with pride (if that is what you want to call it) about building beautiful things.

But if there were others to put into practice what I want to put into practice, I swear I would kiss their feet. Or, more simply, I would give them a smile and shake their hand. Such is the strain of the effort of trying to attain certain things.

There is an inhuman fatigue that leaves us sometimes emptied and as if dead; and if it were not for the sleep that overtakes us in spite of all pains, there would be a

real danger of getting crushed: becoming like certain village idiots, or like madmen raving in straitjackets.

Then, when we wake up, we have to begin all over again.

Politics—Town Planning—Architecture. Some of us architects sat down together to study a plan. The architects belonged to various political tendencies. One may have been a Communist; another, a Christian Democrat; a third, a liberal; a fourth, an independent like myself.

There we were, planning. It seems right to me that each one should reveal in every act a consistency between his acts and his ideas.

If I were a Christian Democrat, it would only be right that, in making up the separate quarters and the city in its entirety, I should stress the church as the generative element of the town structure. Just as if I were a Communist, I should put the same stress on the people's house. That is, it seems right to me that the form of a city, which is nothing but the result of the *Lebensanschauung* of its inhabitants, should reflect the true reality of these inhabitants. And this was true for the city of the past.

At our meeting, instead, no one thought of this. And the so-called technical principle was all-determining. And they said: Let's put the church here, the school there, the hospital down there, the managerial center up here.

As if it were just a new sort of game. In reality, the determinant was compromise—especially compromise with their own consciences. I, who seek only to live, was baffled.

Roll of drums. Flourish of trumpets. Magic wand. And we pass into the realm the "others" call unreal, the realm of utopia. I don't know why.

As if thought were an extraneous product, something outside us, metaphysical, absurd: not something that we carry inside us, as in reality we do, something that moves from inside, that we nurture, as a mother does the child in her womb, and that then is born into the light.

Hence, roll of drums, and flourish of trumpets, and magic wand.

There has been a war. But by now it is so far away that it seems to belong to a remote past. And the photographs imprinted on our brains have begun to fade. And yet we remember. We remember, as we do things we cannot forget because they have become part of our blood, our ancient flesh, something that smacks of eternity or at any rate reaches so far back into the past that it touches the roots of man's appearance on this earth.

We remember. We remember even details, and it would be good to tell them all, because men at war are true. It was then that the city was born for me.

But the details belong to everybody; and, in different ways, all of them were the same for all, more or less.

But some of them are worth recounting.

Night. We are camping (the word is not exact, because it implies the idea of orderliness) in an abandoned peasant house. We are all jumbled together on the dirt floor, in one mess of sleep, exhaustion, and dreams.

Out in the moonlight the sentinels are pacing. We were afraid of commandos. Just as the devil is afraid of holy water, and vice versa. I am sleeping next to the general.

I am awakened by a whisper. It is the officer-of-the-watch. "Ricci," he says, "the commandos are here." The general listens, hears it too. We step outside. A hundred yards off we can clearly discern some commandos. Slowly they are tightening a circle around us.

A few more seconds, and the circle is closed.

A few more minutes, and all of us are awake, barricaded within the house, at the windows and doors.

Feverishly we are awaiting the attack.

The commandos! No joking matter. They kill. Rained from the sky, as they are, behind our lines, they cannot take prisoners. But the attack does not come.

And our fear is rising. I whisper into the general's ear that I should like to make an individual reconnaissance, to break the circle. I jam on my helmet. I grip my pistol. Against submachine guns!

The country around us is terraced: typical of the vine-growing parts of Sicily. Like a cat I climb up to the first level. Then I brush along the retaining wall of the next level. I climb up that one too. At the third level fear grips me. My legs buckle under me. God knows why it seems to me that a burst of gunfire will get me as soon as I stick my head out.

I stay motionless, with my eyes turned up toward the top of the next terrace.

And I see the moon. A summer moon in Sicily. A moon that shines on everything and everybody. Something happens—I don't know just what. Perhaps a feeling of the ridiculousness of the situation. Perhaps the sense of a different dimension. Whatever it be, the fact is that I get up on my feet. Exposed all around. I put my pistol back into its holster. As I remember it, I even take off my helmet.

I climb up to the next level and walk in the moonlight.

A little later I get back into the house. No shot has been fired. The general and the others look at me, flabbergasted. They all had seen the commandos. Their presence is confirmed the next morning by an item of news: a bridge near us, behind the hill, was blown up to cut off our retreat.

But that night the commandos did not shoot.

And nobody has ever known why.

Perhaps, when they saw me take a walk up there, they took me for a local peasant who had remained attached to the soil and to his home.

It is the last day. The whole island has been taken by the enemy. All that remains to us is a bridgehead near Messina, permitting our retreat beyond the straits. This is the last leg of our march toward embarkation. At night, under Bengal lights. The air is red. And the shadows drag along around me. They have thrown away their guns, their knapsacks, even their helmets. Exhaustion is stronger than fear.

I think. I am calm enough to think.

I am alone. I don't even know the fellow who is walking next to me. Gripped by panic, they would be able even to kill one another, for a place on the rafts, to save their own skins. This is in fact what begins to happen. With machine guns we have to set up a firing line to prevent access to the overloaded rafts and keep them from capsizing—just to make these men wait for their turn. I have nothing to exchange with them: neither thoughts nor feelings. Nothing. I have nothing but indifference for them. They are strangers to me, as I am to them even though we have fought together, and complained, and “lived” together. But now: here behind us, close behind, is the enemy. And in front of us are the straits. And beyond, the mainland. That is what matters, the only thing that matters—to reach the mainland. That land that is before us. The land that is so easy to reach on a tourist jaunt. The land that tonight is so far away and so hard to reach. It seems, in fact, impossible: so close is the enemy's watch on the straits.

I said that the “others” were indifferent to me and strangers.

And yet we were together. Never so much together, perhaps, as on that night. And the shadow next to you and unknown to you was nevertheless together with you. Its breath was like your breath. Its torn flesh was your torn flesh. The emptiness in everyone's breast—there where the heart seemed to beat as detached as a grandfather clock in the darkness of a nineteenth-century drawing room peopled only by shadows—that emptiness was the same for all of us. And the same for all of us was the presence of the enemy, behind our backs, and the same the shore yonder that we wanted to reach together.

Never as on that night have I so understood in my own flesh the identical nature of the human adventure.

Miraculously, we had just landed. Perhaps it was the light of dawn that saved us. Because the strafing plane-gunners could not see to aim precisely. And, owing to the uncertain light, they could not fly low over the water.

But we did not even have time to try out our legs on the mainland, to see whether it was solid. And those that had thrown themselves on the ground to kiss the gravelly sand under their palms, had to jump up and run—run as fast as their legs would carry them, inland, together with us, to find some shelter: because on the beach we were too much exposed, too easy a target.

A little later we found each other again, in the darkness of a railway tunnel. And here we came upon a strange society.

It was not the skeleton-like thinness to which the tunnel's inhabitants had been reduced that struck me. Nor was it the tattered state of their clothes. Nor the insufferable stench. It was not the lurking presence of death. I was inured to the smell of cadavers, to the loneliness of children.

What struck me was, on the contrary, the sense of life.

In that tunnel a new society had organized itself. With utter naturalness and existentiality.

So I got used to the place very quickly. It took but a few minutes. I sat down, with my back leaning against the damp wall and my feet braced against the rails. I opened my last can of meat, took out my last cracker. I meant to divide the cracker and the meat into two parts: half of it was to be for the next day, for who knows whether we should have found any other food?

Two children came up. They watched me silently, all skin and bones with eyes dilated by fever as if they were delirious. Starved for who knows how long, and exhausted by dysentery due to the figs and grapes which were the only things they could, occasionally, get hold of to eat.

I was about to give them half the stuff I had put aside. Then, without thinking much, I divided the half I was eating and finished it together with them. The other half I kept.

I was vile, I know. As vile now as I had been courageous the night of the commandos.

And the faces of those starved children were imprinted

on my retina for days and days to come. Sometimes I still see them even now.

And yet I too had to survive. I too was all skin and bones. And, after all, I had given them something:

In spite of that, I was vile.

Yet despite everything it was magnificent to have those faces imprinted way back on my retina: so lastingly, right down to now, sometimes.

It means that we are not alone. It means that we are together.

"All right," the town planners hint with their eyes. "But what has all that to do with the city?" "What has the war, man's solitude, the fear of death, to do with the city?"

My God! As if the city were made only of mouths to feed, of digestive tracts to eliminate the food, of recta to expel the waste products! As if the city were made only of objects that render these processes more comfortable!

Was not that tunnel more a city than our cities today, more a housing project than our low-cost housing projects, more a home than the homes with refrigerators and dishwashers?

Because the truth is that there existed in that place a human solidarity, and prayer was not enough for the devout, nor was cursing enough for the miscreant. Nor staring into the void for him who lived in the absurd.

Nothing of all of that was of any value to anybody.

Because the only law was mystery; and the only possibility, to live in mystery. And the only society was to be found in the feeling that we were all in the same boat, as though the earth were a ship navigating in space, gathering all of us together in this one trip toward this one goal.

And this, exactly, is for me the only justification for the existence of the city.

So the war was over.

But it had been so beautiful to refind ourselves, so marvelous to start anew from zero, that everything now



seemed easy, and the rebuilt cities would be better and more truthful and more *ours*, than those that had been destroyed. Naïve, we were. And thus we lost the peace, we lost the post-war period.

“But my dear Ricci, if you go on like that, we cannot follow you. Leave metaphysics alone, forget about philosophy. Let’s come to the hard core of the question. Planning or no planning. How to conceive of a regulatory plan? How to build houses for those who have none?”

I beg your pardon, my dear colleagues. But some thinking is necessary. And starting from our own experience. And this has been my experience. You understand that if human consciousness were at a different stage of its evolution, politics too would be different; and so would economics; and the city. If man’s needs were less exigent, the houses would be different.

If man were not ashamed of having only one suit, the whole housing project would be different.

You make statistics. Let’s go ahead with your statistics. Statistics show that, for ninety percent of his time, man’s work is unproductive, his machine idling in neutral, making a dry run. He works to create himself artificial paradises because he is not happy. He works to numb himself, in order not to see, just to try to survive.

If he were happy, he would be rich all of a sudden, able to dispose of ninety percent of his time as free time, or, if he wanted to use it for productive work, he would acquire a material wealth of quite another order.

How different the city would be if the parameter were happiness rather than a bewildered sense of being lost.

This is what I thought that night and the next morning. And thus ended my notes on the national convention on town planning.

## Town Planning: A Criticism

You may travel the earth: go where skyscrapers become mountains and cities new landscapes; go to the little African village made of huts; or there where civilization has created masterpieces of art and shining examples of high culture; or to the desert of houses lined up square miles on end. Wherever you go, you'll never find *your* city, the place where you would live happily, where you would feel at ease, where your body would occupy its specific and specified place.

I ascribed it to inexperience, immaturity, perhaps to egocentricity. I even hoped that this explanation was right. Everywhere lonely men; men who work without definite aim, for the sole purpose of surviving; tired men, dragged from birth to death by other men dragging their lives from birth to death.

Traveling this way, you find yourself alone, far away from wife, children, and dear ones, in a studio apartment in one of the cities of this earth; you don't even remember exactly where, to such an extent have you lost contact with reality.

You don't know whether you have eaten or not, whether it is day or night, whether the weather is good or bad.

All this, so as to know the world. And yet man could create his city today better than at any other time. He could possess his earth as never before. All you have to do is to take a plane, to fly and to see the sun continuously or

the night: such is the speed of planes by now. And this should be enough to understand what new dimensions man has discovered, and what new dimensions his city could have—no longer a city, for the earth, if you wish, is one single city: Earth-City.

But the same men who have built rockets that reach the moon live as strangers in the cities of their forebears, whether their stock is ancient and illustrious or whether it appeared just a hundred years ago.

This is a problem that has bothered me since my boyhood days—since the days I ran away from home and from my school work, especially when I lived in Venice and would stroll through its *calle*, its little squares, and climb the bell tower of San Marco to see the city from on high.

By night, when streets are deserted, and most of the people are sleeping, I develop a strange capacity: the capacity of X-raying a city with my thought. And in a strange city, where long habit and familiarity with particular places do not swamp the memory with records of facts and feelings, but where everything appears new, this capacity grows. Thus, no matter whether you roam through the streets on foot, whether you sit on the steps of a church or drive through town in a swift car from the center to the periphery or from the periphery to the center, or whether you are in a plane which, if you are lucky, the airport signals to keep circling around town a few times before a runway is free for the landing, the city presents itself to your sight somewhat like certain architectural structures painted on medieval tablets, with the walls removed so as to reveal the life inside.

Thus I wander through the city, one of the many cities in this world, with one precise idea in my mind: I want to discover what the basic elements are that bind people together—what they are today; not what they were yesterday.

Because I say to myself: if man today is alone (and this is his natural condition), it is useless to create cities. Better

the desert. And then I tell myself: if, in the existing cities, those associative values that kept men together in the past are no longer valid, then this city is no longer true for us; this city is false. And then: But man was not made to live alone. Hence we must find our city, the city of Anonymous (20th Century), the one I call Earth-City.

I have X-rayed so many cities: the great metropolises like Rome, Paris, London, New York, San Francisco, Los Angeles; the medium-sized cities, on a more human scale, like Florence, Venice, Dijon, Amsterdam, Copenhagen, old Boston. The village-cities like San Gimignano, Orvieto, Chartres, and one of the many that exist in the United States.

I have X-rayed even villages, small villages, where peace seems to exist. Mountain villages, fishing villages, farming villages. But there is none that would suit us.

As I wandered about I felt like a king, emperor, ragged beggar, businessman, great industrialist, mail carrier, priest, horseman, cart driver, or street sweeper.

But I never felt myself to be what I really am: a man born in 1918, with a certain history behind me, facing a certain reality today, a man who flies in the sky, who has discovered atomic energy, who tries to reach the moon, who faces things with a new attitude, who has a new and specific justification for existence, who lives in mystery, who has gained new dimensions, who is ready for new adventures on this earth: a man, in short, of the twentieth century. True, I have been talking about myself. I have said: I never felt myself to be what I really am.

I could not have said anything else. This is my personal experience. But by now everybody without exception is in the same boat. By now these new dimensions belong to all. One might also say that some people are aware of them consciously, while others undergo them unconsciously. One might say that some people are aware of them lucidly and spiritually while others notice them only because they can't move in the city streets on account of the traffic.

It does not make any difference. These cities are no good for anybody any more.

But let us take it step by step.

When I wander through a city and X-ray it throughout, I find answers to those questions in the back of my mind. Bitter answers, bitter conclusions for a man of our day. Because these answers are favorable to the men who lived before us.

Because, as you roam through the streets, you will be able to understand what it was that held men together at a certain given period. These cities, therefore, were true for them. It may have been fear of an enemy or fear of God; it may have been obedience to the emperor or it may have been trade or money: something kept those people together. You find the fortress-city, the church-city, the royal-palace-city, the market-city, the stock-exchange-city, but the city has always existed. Ours does not exist.

Our city is nothing but a formless boil attached like a cancer to the old center, the old heart, the old truths. Desperately we are attached by those old umbilical cords along which no nourishment passes any longer. The placenta no longer transmits us any nutrition. And we die outside, without being able to cut loose. Not only that, but in the process we even kill the womb; we kill those old centers, those old hearts, those old truths.

By night, when I wander through the streets and my mind removes the walls of the houses, the handsome façades of the palaces, the tinsel of ancient times, there are only bodies left to behold, one piled upon the other, in denlike rooms, in cemetery-spaces, where modern man cannot find either his dignity or his dimension.

A monstrous gangrene has attacked all the houses and the men who live in them.

No. I am unable to find today in our cities the basic elements that might keep us together.

We live on this earth, we inhabit it, and no one knows why. We camp in the old houses of our ancestors, in tents that are long since worn out and no longer suitable to us.

And yet when I look at the sky, I see it differently today from the way men did in the past. And yet the sun that warms me now warms me differently from the way it warmed the men of the past. And yet all existence today is different from the existence of yesterday.

But let us see what has happened.

Let us look back into times that have only recently become history: the history of our fathers and grandfathers.

Mechanically, just about everyone knows what has happened. There are, furthermore, plenty of books on the histories of cities, which analyze to everybody's satisfaction the phenomena that have led to the break-up of the city. Those who are looking for historical documentation may turn to these books. But by and large everybody knows that there has been a political revolution, an industrial revolution, in between. Everyone knows that man has invented machines, that big factories have come into being; and that, consequently, the city has expanded into conglomerations of enormous masses, owing to the new sources of labor.

Everybody knows about the disastrous consequences of this unforeseen transformation of the city which led to its self-destruction.

Not so many people, perhaps, or, generalizing, only the technicians, know about the means that have been employed to try to remedy the situation.

We could make a historical analysis of the remedies and solutions proposed by the architects, the town planners, or better, the town-planning architects.

Here, however, the documentation becomes more confused: so different are the ideas of different men.

The story, besides, is of too recent date, and we lack the necessary perspective. Those, nevertheless, who want to follow the development of urbanistic thinking through its ups and downs may do so by means of the written history of modern town planning.

I won't enlarge on this, therefore.

For me it is sufficient to touch just on certain points.

For me it is sufficient, after all, to state that there are two different attitudes toward town planning, which I might define as the planning of the masters and the planning of the bureaucrats. Also because these two different attitudes reflect, in a certain sense, two different periods of the town-planning architect: the one belonging to the period following the First World War, the other to that following the Second. Even though, naturally, the difference is not as clear-cut as all that; for, obviously, there are masters still living today, and there have been bureaucrats before. In between, as always, there is the attitude of the agnostics.

The attitude of the masters is self-evident. There have been, and there still are, certain architects of great critical and creative capacities, who have tried to solve the crisis of the city through a personal analysis of the problems and who consequently proposed solutions. The proposals they put forward may have had the great merit of raising the level of urbanistic thinking, of breaking with certain fixed patterns of the past, of trying to adapt our thinking to modern dimensions, even of suggesting and inventing new solutions which in part are still valid today; but at the same time they show the weakness of any personal interpretation.

The very fact that the interpretation of one and the same historical phenomenon may suggest solutions so totally different and contradictory among themselves, demonstrates the impossibility for one individual man to interpret all of history, imposing his personal opinion on the evolutionary life-process.

If these theoretical town plans or housing projects had been put into practice, we would today see people living in surroundings that have no common roots among themselves. There would be people, that is, forced to live according to a fixed diagram imposed from above, which, however interesting or ingenious it might be, would in the last analysis always remain arbitrary. This is the first aspect of the problem.

But there is another one, basic in my opinion, which all these plans, these theoretical cities, have in common. None of these plans is based on the search for the fundamental truths for the sake of which men should stay together. Things are accepted the way they are, the way they have been handed down to us. The fundamental problems are simply left out, or their solution is taken for granted. All the plans of the masters are idealistic plans. That they are of an idealistic nature is proved by the very fact that they are theoretical: envisaging ideal towns, after all.

But no one asks the question: What has happened to thought? Is it still tangled in the gilded schemes of a late-nineteenth-century idealism, in the rhetoric of die-hard possibilism at any price?

But are these positions not long since obsolete?

Is it not a quite new brand of human history that is unfolding in the various fields of man's activity, which can no longer renew this sort of bill of exchange—especially after the latest discoveries in the field of science? Why do we forget the real crisis of modern man, which, basically, is of a very complex order: of a religious order, if that is what you want to call it; of a social order, if you prefer; a crisis of customs, if you want; or to put it succinctly, a crisis of existence?

The asset of these masters was and still is that they were men of faith, men who believed in mankind, who believed in the future.

But then came the Second World War.

When we came back from the war, we were no longer able to believe in the noble efforts represented by the masters' ideal cities—or at least, that is what happened to me. Together with our hopes, we had to lock up in a drawer those abstract sheets of town planning that we had secretly drawn: because, at that time, every one of us, perhaps, had an ideal city planned and designed in the secret recesses of his heart. Even though a reaction against this attitude had been in the air prior to that time, it was



then that it took on form and consistency. It was then that the urbanism of the bureaucrats was born.

Even in the schools—at least in the Italian schools—town planning was now taught differently. In a more humble way. It was an urbanism based on the concrete reality of the facts, on research, on statistics. The town-planning architect transformed himself from a master-architect-creator into a technician-architect-sociologist.

It was an interesting experiment, if you want to see it that way, at least from the human angle.

But let's take it step by step.

We said: the urbanism of the bureaucrats. It is a strange sort of urbanism. Strange, because it comprises the stupid and banal urbanism of the little municipal employee together with the intelligent, well-documented, statistically justified urbanism of the avant-garde planner.

Let's have a look at this latter. Who is he? No longer the urbanist-creator, shut up in his ivory tower. He is the citizen-urbanist, engaged in the politics and in the social life of his country. Hence he is no longer alone. The town planners joined together, first in a squadron, then in a phalanx, and finally in a whole army: an army of urbanists disciplined within an organization with ranks like military officers. Conventions were held, at first, and then ever-growing congresses, congresses of two or three thousand urbanists. This, at least, is what happened in Italy.

The town-creating act was supposedly replaced by regulation. From the ideal city-plan they moved down to the regulatory plan. Not that such an instrument did not exist. But it was, first of all, academic. It was an arbitrary act of command, without basis or justification. In Italy, at least, it was a fascist act. For that matter, we were still living in that sort of climate.

Then the regulatory plan changed aspect. Rational and integral planning was attempted: interregional plans, regional plans, municipal plans, detailed plans. Planning had become the password: planning from above.

In planning, it seemed, a cure-all had been discovered; a method, at last, had been found.

In a certain sense this was good. A new urbanistic conscience was being born. It was felt that urbanism belonged to the collectivity, no longer to individual thaumaturges.

But what remained to us was a handful of flies.

When one of us was commissioned to make a regulatory plan—at least that is what happened to me—and, faced with the city that was to be planned for, put himself to work, he realized that he was helpless. It was like operating on the body of a patient whose disease you don't know, without a diagnosis, without sufficient knowledge even of his true anatomy. An operation in the dark: gropingly. You could gather all the statistics and other documentation you wanted; you might indeed draw on all branches of man's rational knowledge. It was no use. The body you had to operate on remained there, on the operating-room table, unknown to you, a stranger.

What came into being, accordingly, were *paper* regulatory plans: abstract, and more arbitrary even than those of the masters. For the latter, however mistaken, at least contributed some positive elements of inventiveness: invention of form, invention of new factors, invention of organisms. Here, instead, there was nothing of the sort. The end product of a regulatory plan is a pile of sheets of paper, with so many little circles diagramming more or less arbitrarily the life of men. Here, the residential quarter. There, low-cost housing project. Over there, community center. And so on. Not only is there no analysis of the really vital elements that make up a city, there is not even a financial plan, a budget. Nothing. Pure academicism.

A number of doubts arose within me.

These urbanists proceeded with great assurance. But I did not know on what they based this assurance. It seemed as though they carried the solutions to all the problems of modern man in their pockets.

It seemed they knew what life was all about, they knew

the *raison d'être* of the city, they knew the true nature of forms, of space, of matter.

Then you discovered that their pockets were empty.

My own educational background was different. My cultural and human education was of a more solitary, less public species. What was of interest to me, from the war years on, was to sink my mind into more basic questions, for example, whether life was worth living and why. I knew cities in another way—not through congresses, but by living in them. Roaming through their streets by night. At dawn, seeing people waking up, workers going to work, women going shopping. Watching the children play or go to school. I watched the life of the old folks. Even that of the beggars. I remember how I followed them around in Paris, for a long time, those with the beards. I tried to see how they managed to get along and survive. I went to the slums, to the ill-famed sections of town.

My education, you may say, is somewhat more literary, more personal. I grant you that. But that is what it is. And this is what I can contribute.

Naïvely I asked myself: How can they be so sure of themselves if they know nothing about these matters? How can they operate? As if the problem of the city were a purely “rational” problem: so many people, so many rooms; so many cars, so many streets; so large a population, so large an area for the community center; and so on.

I began to express my doubts—all the more so as I began to find out that they were not mine alone. There were other architects who saw the problems just about the way I did. But every time, I found myself looking up an unsurmountable wall. Among these active town-planning architects there are some that I simply cannot stand personally. I don't trust them. They are go-getters, demagogues; they are shallow, even if they know how to make a good speech and put up a good fight. But there are others for whom I feel esteem and fondness; who, I feel, are close to me and friendly.

With these latter I talked more frankly. And the result

was the same! When I talked to them of man's unhappiness, of his solitude, his enslavement, they looked at me in a funny way as if that was all beside the point. They thought I was way off. As if the city were not the sum total of these men, of their existences, of their problems and their sufferings.

I just couldn't stand it any longer. And so, some years ago, at the congress of which I wrote in the previous chapter, I exploded a bomb. I really did nothing but express these doubts publicly. But it was as though it was the crack of doom. They accused me of I don't know how many things: of being antisocial, of being an anarchist, of not understanding the historical situation.

During the following four years I tried in various ways to insist on this initiative of mine. Once, at a preparatory meeting for one of those congresses, I delivered a lecture: "On the Solitude of Modern Man." On the impossibility, consequently, of creating a city on wrong premises by postulating, as it were, a non-solitude. They didn't even let me finish my talk. There were some men who boyishly and demagogically exclaimed, "We refuse to go along with this. What mankind needs is houses." As if I had said anything to the contrary! True, some of these same men then raised very similar problems during the official congress; true, many of them have since then changed their minds on a number of points. But these are meager comforts. No good. Bureaucratic urbanism, uncreative, sterile, and impossible, is still with us.

People dodge fundamental questions; they do not want to look into themselves; they shun any failure, lest the general failure imply their personal failure as well. They try to change the laws. And the laws really are antiquated, inadequate, mistaken. But this is not the point. It is in ourselves, my dear urbanist-architects, that we must first of all find our city. And if we do not find it there, all our efforts in other directions will be wasted or, worse, will be harmful, inasmuch as they will delay the development of a genuine new urbanistic consciousness.

Perhaps this discussion has become too personal. In a book, perhaps this discussion should have been more detached, loftier, less involved in everyday life. Perhaps I should not have touched on things which are peculiarly Italian. In other countries . . . in other countries. . . . But no. In other countries the situation is the same. Because, though it is true that in certain Scandinavian countries town planning is more advanced; that in England legislation in this sector is more adequate and the government itself takes a part in planning; that in the United States, though urbanism is kept totally separate from architecture, really new cities are nevertheless being created; though it is true that in Russia problems of this order are presented in a totally different way; that urbanism, finally, in spite of all efforts to make it a universal science, is still very different in different countries—it is just as true that in no country have people had the courage to get down to a final analysis of man's problem: to see what this man of today really is and what he needs.

No one notices that it would be enough to observe (I am here engaging in a *ratio per absurdum*—yet not so absurd after all) that the family, as we know it, is, as an institution, a mistake, or that the relation between work and home, such as it is today, is wrong, or that the settled way of human life has come to an end and mankind could become nomadic again. It would be enough for one of these hypotheses to materialize, and we should see how all the efforts undertaken, all the millions and billions spent on the expansion of cities which have more than doubled during these last fifty years, have no meaning: money thrown out the window, aggravating the problems rather than solving them; that man has not found his city but got lost in quicksands. We should come to the conclusion that if the former attitude, that of the masters, was questionable, at least it had yielded certain positive results, whereas the second, though apparently more genuine and humble, has not produced any fruit at all; nor will it ever be able to produce any, if we insist on this approach which is bound

gradually to undermine our faith and our hope for the future which, at least, the masters kept intact and taught and bequeathed us.

We should also allude briefly to the urbanism (or, rather, non-urbanism) of the agnostics. But would it be worth while? True, architects of high repute belong to this category, architects who have sensible and profound things to say.

But they are people of the old stamp, who believe that life by itself is capable of solving our problems. But what is life? Are not thought, reasoned analysis, men's creative acts, part of life? How is it possible, today, to conceive of a so-called spontaneous urbanism, except at the price of the destruction of all the values of the past and of the ancient cities; except at the price of continuing a chaos that reigns sovereign over all things? Good faith is not enough today; nor is good will. What is needed today is mental clarity. True, life is enough, if by life we mean also the conscious and creative act of man. Life is not enough if we understand it merely as a sort of fatalism leaving it to time to take care of things.

But let us not fall into polemics; the stakes are too high! What, after all, remains in our hands? How can we architects really operate? What are our tools? What can we do in the immediate future?

The conclusion may seem pessimistic, negative. Some sort of fatality, of impossibility, seems to be weighing down everything and everybody. All that is happening around us, beginning with the events in international politics, seems to confirm this state of things. And in this old Europe, squeezed as it is between two giant worlds, the situation seems to be coming to a head. What remains to us? Maybe nothing, except going to the café to seek intellectual satisfaction in defeatist criticism?

But I really do not think so. Everything that is happening or about to happen has a reason, after all. Nothing that happens is lost. And it is right that it be so. Right, that men at last are becoming aware of so many things.

They are becoming aware of the fact, first, that the world must no longer be run by politics, but rather on the basis of a serious attempt to find out how men can live better on this earth, and that this is the only way that is left to us. And consequently they will find out how important it will be to search for our city.

Let us, then, pass to the second part of our discussion. To the constructive, not merely critical, part of the chapter.

And here I have to open another personal parenthesis, to avoid any possible misunderstanding.

Once we have arrived at certain points in our discussion, once my criticism has torn down certain positions of theirs, and once they have had to give in and admit it, some of my friends remain perplexed and ask me: "And where do you go from here?" "Go from where?" I could answer. So deep-seated is, in our age, the habit of the great industrialists who reason always with an eye to the balance in their bank account, that even so-called intellectuals have taken over this way of reasoning, this bank-account attitude.

In the world of research, on the other hand, things are different. In the world of thought you may demolish a defect, an error, of the past, without offering any remedy. And this by itself is already a positive result. Just as in science you might discover the etiology of an ailment without yet knowing the medicine capable of curing it. The medicine will come. But it is a step forward to have found the causes of the ailment.

After all, it is something positive to have established the fact that man today is lonely, that he has not found the real reasons that bind him to other men, that the associative elements, the pivots on which the motives for forming cities should revolve, do not exist, and that, accordingly, the city today cannot exist. Would this not be a fixed point? Would it not be better to have established this than to go on building spurious cities, spurious housing projects, based on old, spurious plans? It would

be far more honest to say: "We really don't know what we want."

Let's drop ambitious programs, meaningless experiments; let's stop plastering the earth with our monstrous housing projects, our monstrous houses; and let us instead build only barracks, tents, temporary housing-machines, on wheels, like trailers. Comfortable, and nothing else—until we really know what we need. It won't be architecture, but . . . so what? It will always be better than a lie become fact. This would be a way, a humbler, more truthful way, less harmful to man. Tomorrow, tomorrow, when we shall have found new and genuine reasons for living together, only then shall we build our cities.

This is the first answer I should give to my friends. There is also another one.

Throughout this book I have been affirming that solutions must not be personal, that the attitude of "the master" is wrong, that we must not create new rules, new dogmas, new tendencies, new "isms," and so on. Therefore, even assuming that I had the solution, would it not be wrong on my part to reveal it?

And this is the second answer I could give.

But often they insist and they say to me: And yet you go on working, you build houses, you teach, your buildings are successful, and yet, and yet, and yet . . .

But don't you know that I give a merely experimental value to all that I have done, because there are basic errors, because I am not really Anonymous, because what I have created are only fragments: fragments of space, of materials, of new tactile sensations. But these fragments today have no other meaning, and tomorrow I could easily do without them.

And yet I understand their position.

In a world in which everybody has acquired the habit of drafting manifestoes, programs, ideas, solutions, one who says, after all, "I really have nothing to offer you, except my attitude," must seem ridiculous. Therefore I am going to make an effort. I'll try to explain how I would



set out to build a city, if I had to—the ambitious and humble Earth-City.

I will try to put down not rules but rather working principles; to elucidate not axioms but only premises—just an attitude, as I already said. An attitude that may be convincing, if expressed to its maximum. I am going to try, even though I really don't know whether I am going to succeed. I don't know whether you will be disappointed.

Let's begin with a clean slate.

## Town Planning: An Analysis

We can start with some questions: What are the differences between the architects of my generation and those who preceded us? What is there new that we can give, or what can we contribute?

One thing is sure: none of the architects prior to my generation ever had to face the basic questions that I keep repeating in this book:

Is life worth living or not? Is it worth while, accordingly, to build houses? Is it worth while to build housing projects, to build cities?

Here, after all, lies the difference: the architects of the generation preceding mine started from certainty. I start from doubt.

They worked on the basis of convictions; I, on the basis of nothing.

I never found them beset by the questions that have kept assailing me during the war and the postwar years. Even in those countries where revolutions in thinking and in economic systems have apparently changed the way of life, these questions have not been asked. Not even in Russia. And yet it was in that country that Kirillov sprang from the brain of Dostoevski.

It would seem as though the architect, forced as he is to act or else his work is nonexistent, had been heretofore unable to make use of certain tools of research which

were at the disposal of other men, especially of the philosophers and poets.

If I have to build, I must base my work on certain established values. This seems self-evident. And yet you can start from a different position. You can start from the "non-value." Or, more exactly, from the non-a-priori-value. And this is what I want to explain now.

If we look at the structure of ancient cities, it is easy to discern the root of their formation.

If we want to generalize, we may say that one of the motive centers of the city has always been the fear of the metaphysical: hence the invention of god. Whether in the circle for the magic and propitiatory rites of the savage, or in the incantatory Greek temple or in the Christian church, one of the weighty factors determining the city has always been the religious power. Besides this, there was another important and decisive element: the palace of the emperor, the royal residence, the houses of the nobles: in other words, the civil power. In essence, the earthly and the heavenly kingdom.

The weights and measures of these powers varied with the varying time, but the relationship between church and state is always evident, in one guise or another. The form of the city has varied accordingly, and so accessible is the history of the inhabitants' life through a reading of the city that for every phase we could write a book, or a chapter of a book.

Then there were other generating elements, changing with the changing times—theaters, arenas, stadiums, markets—but they too revolved around these two principal powers.

As long as man was a slave, therefore, the city could exist; it could be ordered, because there was a rule, whatever rule it may have been. But if man is free, this can no longer happen. The formation of our cities can no longer originate from anything a priori, except at the price of its self-condemnation. As long as churches, or government palaces or army barracks or party headquar-

ters or managerial centers—to put it in modern terms—constitute the ganglia of our cities, these cities will not be ours; they will be nothing but prisons for slaves.

This is the critical point. The crisis of our city lies in this: the impossibility for man, up to now, to live in the mystery and outside of myths. The disorder, the chaos of our cities, for which we find a thousand explanations like sudden growth, mechanization, etc., is caused in reality by the progressive destruction of the obsolete values of a slave society.

As long as men are undecided and hesitant about dropping this ancient burden from their shoulders, there is no possibility for a new world to be born. There is not even any hope in sight.

The city of the future, the city of Anonymous (20th Century), Earth-City, will belong only to that man who has teetered on the brink of suicide for want of values, and, finally, one morning, has aroused himself from this state and is ready for anything, and that's that.

But you will say: If you destroy all pre-existing values, on what will you base your constructions, whether they be made of words or of stone?

Would not you be basing yourself on the absurd, the imponderable, the vague and void?

Or have you perchance become a mystic?

It might seem as though I had arrived at a position of faith. But it is not so, quite the contrary.

Let me try to explain.

Look, my dear friends, try to understand me, I say, beyond the meaning of words. Perform for me the integration of those meanings that are hidden behind the words; create the context that is missing; lend me a hand in doing what I cannot do. When all those mythical values are destroyed and extirpated from your flesh as though by a knife, and, though bewildered and dazed, you succeed in surviving, and you look once more at the sun which formerly had lost its meaning, you suffer. You

feel like dying. And it seems that there is nothing any longer to help you live. And yet it is not true. You open your eyes, and you look at things again, and lo, they are new, virginal, innocent, at last. There are no longer any values, but the stones at last are stones, the grass is grass, the smile of a child is the smile of a child, the kiss of a woman is the kiss of a woman.

Meaning is intrinsic, within the things themselves. You don't approach these things any longer with that mask on your face, made of a priori judgments which divide us. At last you really touch things. It is not a metaphysical world, nor is it a physical world. Not the world of the mystic, nor that of the savage. Things exist in themselves, as such. Set in relationship with other things, they gain new meanings. This, this alone is life.

And if you look now at urbanism, you will understand that the same phenomenon must materialize there too.

It is not a question of organizing a series of pre-established values, or of inventing new ones and throwing them on the market. It is no longer a question of organizing squares, green spaces, churches, schools, hospitals, houses.

All this won't help us any more.

The operation now is much simpler, and more authentic.

All we have to do is to understand the course of our day.

To examine the actions of our day—the day of everybody: of the old folks, of the young, of the children. The day of the mailman, the bricklayer, the clerk, the professor, the peasant. Of all those who together make up the collectivity.

And here the problem takes on two aspects: one, more evidently logical, accessible, in a certain way, to analysis from your desk; the other, more hidden, more secret, and needing some intuition for its demonstration. It is here, after all, that the main difficulty of the problem resides. Because the bureaucratic town planners, even the most intelligent among them, who base their certainty on the merely rational and positivistic aspect of things, are utterly

unable to perceive the other aspect, which for me is far more important for man's life but which does not become tangible unless experienced personally.

I said: let us examine the actions of our day.

Those others, instead, used to examine those actions as institutions.

Let's see the difference.

Let us take some of these acts.

The workingmen get up in the morning and go to work.

For the others, the problem presented itself in these terms: they had to circumscribe a working zone in the city, the industrial zone, for example; locate it in such a way that the wind-borne fumes and smoke should not infest the residential zones; they had to build streets wide enough to contain the traffic of public and private means of transportation, and so on.

My problem is different.

It arises from the root. My problem is: Is work a curse or a blessing? It is a necessity. If it is a necessity, must this work be done with joy and participation, or painfully and in a detached manner? If it is to be done joyfully and with participation, what must the factory be, and what must be its position in the city? What should be the relation between work and rest, between factory and home?

From such an analysis, perhaps, something new will be born.

Almost certainly there will no longer be industrial zones and residential zones, separate and hostile, but an osmosis will be attempted between factory and home, and a relationship created somewhat like the old one between workshop and home in the ancient city, when the workman was a craftsman rather than an industrial worker.

And since some factories obviously produce fumes, and since the factory must be close to a traffic artery permitting contact with a system of transportation for its products, something of the old city scheme is bound to change. The closed formation of the city will no longer be possible, if we have to create a contact between factory and home

and, at the same time, between factory and superhighway.

Or take another thing: when the workingman wakes up in the morning and has to go to work, how does he get there? Does he have to travel in a private car or walk on foot or take a public means of transportation? Should his way-to-work give him vital sensations, let him share in sunshine and nature, or is it enough that he have the quickest possible gadget at his disposal, one, perhaps, that runs underground? It is in the face of these problems that the plan of the city will have to change; because a new relationship will be established between nature and the works of man, replacing the old one between country and city.

Let us take yet another thing.

Woman. The root of a most serious problem.

There are women who go to work. There are women who stay at home. There is the working woman and the housewife. In different countries, the proportions are different.

Now how do the others reason?

They simply don't think about it. In their regulatory plans I find nothing that would indicate the existence of this problem.

And yet I consider it a very important problem.

In my mind, it gives rise to a number of questions.

Should women work like men or should they not? Must they remain housewives forever? The answer requires a long preparation and cannot be given by the architect alone. Others must be consulted. As far as I am concerned, I can say merely that it seems to me that modern woman cannot be just a housewife: a woman, that is, who has to go husband-hunting, or else she is finished. Hence she must work to be free to think of her independent individual life.

But on the other hand I consider that woman is biologically different from man, that nature imposes on her other duties, like childbirth and nursing.

And thus another question arises: What type of work

is suitable for man, and what type for woman? This is all the more important inasmuch as man's physical nature fits him for one type of work, whereas woman is predestined for another type. I see, then, that architecture will change, the type of housing will change, the character of the home is bound to change.

The old nucleus of the home, for instance, will no longer be what it used to be: the apartment as we know it. Whether we are dealing with the apartment in the hive-type low-cost housing project or with the de luxe villa-apartment in the residential section, the problem does not change. The melancholy of the empty apartment is the same, when man and woman have gone to work and the older children are at school, while the pre-school children are left "wild" round the house, entrusted to a watchful grandmother, if the situation permits it, or to the care of a nursery school, if society is organized along more modern lines. And the melancholy is the same, when the housewife alone remains there, a bit of a slave, a bit of a mother, a bit of a mistress when the husband comes home at night and feels like making love. If we studied these problems in their full depth, something would come of it. Supposing that we found a type of work suitable for women, we should see that the nucleus of habitation would have to be totally changed; for the apartment-school, apartment-market relations—and so on—would have to be changed.

The concept of the home, in short, would change; and consequently, that of the residential quarter; and consequently, that of the city. More, indeed, is needed than little circles on a piece of paper indicating the extent of the de luxe residential quarters, of the low-cost housing projects for industrial workers: maximum height, such-and-such; proportion between total area and building area, such-and-such. More is needed than figuring where the W.C. should go or what would be the best place for the kitchen—which is what the rationalists are doing.



Do you see how step by step everything is changing? Do you see that it is just the people who today are called poets, tomorrow anarchists, the day after tomorrow utopians, who change the cards on the table?

It is just these people who, outside of any myth, whether religious or political, on the basis of relationships, on the basis of life, will discover, step by step, what you call the values on which to base the foundations of our city. It is just these people, poor devils, without certainty, without opinions, without ideas, who—slowly, slowly—will find our city, Earth-City.

Let us now have a look at some specific elements like the school, the hospital, the theater, etc.

Let us start with the school.

The rationalists say: So many inhabitants, so many children; so many children, so many classrooms; so many classrooms, so many schools. And this reasoning they apply to all sorts of schools: nursery schools, grade schools, high schools, and colleges. Maximum radius, such and such. And the problem is solved. At most, a brief discussion is added as to whether the school should have one story or two, whether the classrooms should be built for twenty-five or for thirty children each.

For me the problem is different. I ask myself first of all what education really is and how it should be administered. In what sector it would be right to restrict teaching to a certain small number of students, and in what other sectors it would be advantageous to put together as many as 100, or even 200 or 300, employing, perhaps, visual aids such as films or television. Then I ask myself what should be the relationship between home and school; and what, accordingly, should be the children's way to school.

What's more, I even ask myself whether the school, as a building, is not bound to disappear altogether. Whether it should not become an integral part of the home (at least as far as the nursery school is concerned).

Whether, in other words, it is wholesome, at least for those under six, to be regimented, or whether it would not be better to leave them free in the community which exists among the homes and which all the members of the community may enjoy. And this is where the discussion of the rationalists loses its footing. Because the concept of the school itself may totally change.

Let us go on to the hospital.

The rationalist says: Hospital; hospital zone for a city of so and so many inhabitants; then, first-aid stations, etc. At most he will give some consideration to the question whether the hospital should be built all in one block, or whether it should consist of various pavilions: army-barracks or hotel type.

But I ask myself: Who is the patient? Someone who is to be ostracized by society and accordingly secluded, or someone who, just because he is sick, needs society even more than the healthy, and wants to be loved and coddled by all?

And thus the hospital totally changes its aspect.

There will no longer be maternity hospitals, factories for the production of children; or hospitals to furnish washing and lubricating services and minor repairs for reparable mechanisms; or hospitals as asylums for the aged, factories for the production of death.

But some of you will say: This is absurd. Do you want, perchance, to return to the Middle Ages, when children were born at home, the sick kept at home, and the old died at home? What about surgical operating rooms, specific treatments, the organization of the whole?

But this is just what I was driving at: the organization. I can't tell, but offhand it would seem to me less expensive, for example, to equip mobile operating rooms, to go to the patient than to move the patient to the surgical amphitheater.

I wonder whether it is really easier in every respect, and more humane, for society to gather all its old folks together in humiliating asylums, or whether it would not

be much better to create some sort of organization to take care of the old in their own homes.

I wonder whether it is less burdensome for society to have children born in hospitals where fathers cannot see their own babies except through glass panes, like choice spring chickens on a model farm, or whether it would be better to let them be born close to mothers, fathers, and siblings.

The sense of birth, life, and death, by God, should be admitted to the community, and should not be relegated to hospitals, those modern taboos of man.

Does life not consist, is it not made, of these elementary sensations like being born, living, and dying? Why then should we take them out of the collective life?

Or take the market.

The nostalgic mind turns with relish to the little old market square, with the wares piled on carts covered with red, yellow, and green awnings, and the peasants calling out their wares to customers with straw shopping baskets; while the modernist thinks of colossal supermarkets, where everything is in order, the price is fixed, the merchandise guaranteed, and the wrapping perfect. Life is beautiful in the midst of this living mass of fruit and vegetables that still smell of the earth, says the former. Marvelous to think of this fruit without grubs, these vegetables without worms, says the latter.

But what justification is there for one or the other of these kinds of market? Would it not be better to look for something that could express the relationship between the acts of buying, of choosing, and the sensual pleasure of the buyer at seeing the objects?

Or take sports.

The rationalists say: So many inhabitants, so many tennis courts, so many swimming pools, so many football fields.

But why don't people ask themselves: What is sport? Should it be what it is today? Is it right, for example, that nations pledge their honor in international competi-

tions? Is it right that amateur sportmanship has given way to professionalism and that athletes are paid their weight in gold or become high officers in the army? Is it right that athletes should drug themselves to the point, occasionally, of dropping dead? Is it right that in civilized nations universities should promote students when they are good at playing football? Is it right that anyone should be exalted as a star just because he jumps like a kangaroo rather than like a man? Is it right that crowds become mad and hysterical, seeing themselves as heroes in the arena when in reality they themselves are fat, flabby, and faded like old flags? Is it right that, in a world in which even God shows suicidal tendencies, torches be lit on the altars of the god of sports as in the times of the slaves?

If it is not right, then the whole concept of sport will change. Sport, so called, will be practiced in order to strengthen the human body, to make it more resistant to disease, healthier, handsomer: it will not be the exclusive attribute of some while the others just look on. And thus it will no longer be man that goes to the arena, but the arena that goes to the home. So that the children may enjoy the sun and swim and play. And the grownups too may alternate work with play, fill their lungs with oxygen and feel well. And this new aspect of sport will bring about further changes in the make-up of the city.

Let us pass on to the theater. But what is the theater? Is it the Greek theater, the Roman theater, the medieval theater, or the salon theater of the nineteenth century? And how is it located in the city? Should it be isolated, or central, and what form should it have?

But I say: The theater existed because the drama existed. The drama existed because there was a need for it. The need existed, because men always had to debate certain problems of their time together in an exposition by the author, interpreted by actor personages in front of an audience.

But what is our need today? What, accordingly, is our drama and what must be our theater?

We don't know.

It could even be that we no longer need any theater at all. It could be that other means of expression have taken its place.

The election campaign speech, perhaps; the debate in parliament, made accessible to all through television.

Or the televised broadcasts, perhaps, of a rocket leaving for the moon, with all its pathos, its drama, its tension, its problems.

Perhaps yes, perhaps no.

It is also possible that we humans are unable to invent a new drama, really ours and suited to our needs. But only if we are able to do that can we create a new form of theater, a new theater as an architectonic organism; only then shall we find the right place for this theater in our city.

And so we might go on.

The museum. What is the museum? Must there really be museums? Or has the time come to do away with this sort of cemetery of ancient masterpieces?

And the church? Must there still be churches? Must they be for everybody? Will there be many churches or just one ecclesia in the Greek sense: a house for all, open by day and by night, where people may go to rest, where couples of lovers may talk of love, and children play?

On the other hand, quite new elements must be taken into account that did not exist in the ancient cities.

For example the airport.

Should it be something extraneous and shut off, miles away from the city, connected with the center by more or less adequate roads? During their normal days people get no idea at all of what an airplane really is. Only on the day they have to take one do they go to the airport and get into one of those station-hangar-cars which makes the whole thing still more outlandish.

And yet the airplane belongs to us. To fly has become something normal. Much more common than riding on horseback. But the airport is remote from the city.

In Earth-City this must not be so.

Our children must be able to see planes take off and land, and maybe rockets too, just as the children of other times saw the horse-drawn carriages and the stage-coach arriving in the main square, or leaving it.

We shall be drenched with vital sensations just as our ancestors rejoiced at the sight of a passing chariot. The butterflies, birds, and kites of the children of the future will be the airplanes and rockets.

After an examination of all these problems, still others remain: subtler and less obvious ones. We still have to examine the life within individual things.

Shoes, for example: how shoes are made, who should make them, and how they should be made. Or clothes, for example: how dresses are made, who should make them, and how they should be made. Or kitchen utensils: how they are made, who should make them, and how they should be made. And the same for cars, planes, ships, trains, and so on.

And you say there is no future, there is no hope! The old values inevitably got man bogged down in quicksand; it was fated that he end up in fear, without hope, without a morrow. Just as it is logical that an entirely new field of experience, of search, and of joy of living is finally opening up before our eyes, for us, the Anonymous (20th Century), the real inhabitants of this our Earth-City.

How beautiful it would be to say once more: "Men of good will": instead of losing ourselves in the dead gore of a finished world, in a maze without an exit, let us be simple, let us really see, all together, what the basic elements of our life together are. Let us roll up our sleeves. Let us begin from scratch. Yes, the reasons for our staying together do exist; and therefore there is a reason for the existence of our city; only it is no longer the reason of the past. The city has become a unique city. One that comprises all the others within itself. Our city is Earth-City.

What Rome, Florence, Paris, London, and New York were yesterday, the Earth, Moon, Venus, and Mars will be tomorrow. We don't know. But we know that we have at our disposal all the elements for building our Earth-City; and all we need is the good will to begin.

## Town Planning: The Vision

If I say vision, this seems to imply a special visionary state: a moment of mental lucidity, typical of the prophet or the mystic or the divine; a moment touched by grace, invaded by the Holy Spirit; or something of the sort.

But the word "vision" has as its root-meaning "to see," not "to foresee." It is enough to see. I have seen Earth-City for a good long time. What I have seen has never been an abstract thing, ideal, such that you could sketch it on paper. No, paper is another thing. I cannot reduce the earth, its form, its weight, its variations, its differences, its particular aspects to a mere piece of paper on which to draw a city plan.

And this in itself seems important to me.

The vision of Anonymous (20th Century) cannot be translated into abstractions on a piece of paper. The earth, at times, has seemed to me a tiny little thing, from the height of a plane flying at thirty thousand feet, and even tinier when my mind soared to still loftier heights: a ball in the delicate hands of a child. It appeared to me as it might to a god, a thing created, capable of transformations on the eighth day (when it was up to man, that is, to continue with life after God had finished his creation and taken his day of rest). But at all times, even in the most exalted moments, I have seen tangible things. Things that could be built and become tangible.



I shall never make them. But I could have made all that I have seen.

When I have seen mountains, I have not always seen mountains really known to us, and the same when I have seen seas, rivers, plains. But my images were always born of a direct contact with a place, or of an indirect contact through memory; sometimes, however, the landscape has been imaginary.

But the mountains and the rivers and the plains that I have seen always have had their form, their color, their weight. And the force of gravity of the earth and the quality of the materials and the sky by night and by day and the electric light and every aspect of the vision always maintained the reality that things have: just as when I make a very precise project, and I know the place and the function of the thing I am projecting, I know its destination. I know the client, his financial possibilities: in short, all the elements that you have to know if you want to make a thing, not beautiful, perhaps, not perfect, but truthful and human, and sometimes you hit the mark, sometimes you miss, as happens with all things that belong to life.

Now I have to clarify another point that is important to me. During the vision, there is no distance between me and the thing, no distance, for example, between me and the earth, or Earth-City, or any of its details.

What I mean is that during the vision the thing I see is not like a fantasy or like a science-fiction movie! Nor is it like a realistic film. Nor is it like a model, nor like a painting. It is nothing detached, in other words.

The vision is characterized by that particular attitude that permits man to be outside and, at the same time, inside the thing seen, and even more than that, to pass from the outside to the inside at his pleasure, or, to be more precise, according to whether the thing seen requires at any particular moment that he who sees it be outside or inside. When you make a project, you may stay inside or outside the thing, which, translated into more

technical terms, means to think in volume. You may stay outside, that is, you may see the thing from a distance as if it had already been constructed, as a tourist may see, from the outside, a medieval square in one of our cities. And you may stay inside, and feel the weights, the stresses, the tensions, of the materials.

I might say that I have not only seen Earth-City but that, in a certain sense, I have also designed it. In some regards this design is generic; in some parts it is worked out in detail. In some aspects it is ready to be executed.

If I wanted to be paradoxical, I might say that I can already be happy—happen what may. For Earth-City is already in existence. Because, if its plan is no longer a personal fact but the historical resultant of the thought of all men, if it is the fruit of the labor of Anonymous (20th Century), it undoubtedly will be built, even if it has not been built yet. That is obvious, beyond the contingent possibilities of history.

This Earth-City, then—not only have I seen it, but, more than that, it has been designed, and, paradoxically, it has already been built.

Therefore I should be able to describe it. But it will be better if we go and see it together. Let us take some means of transportation, a helicopter, for instance, and let us go see Earth-City.

Two weeks have gone by. In two weeks we have comfortably circled the earth twice.

The first time we saw it such as it is today. A fragmented earth, defaced, cancerous.

Deserts and mountains, as always: stupendous and absolute landscapes where man is still a stranger just as if he had landed on the moon.

Little old cities, cut out by historical evolution, harmonious, composed: cribs on a 1:1 scale, little worlds in themselves, lands of another time when men could still “possess” land.

Miles, square miles, as far as the eye can reach, cut

out on the map and transferred onto the surface of the earth: mountains, rivers, or forests; land for conquests, as if the earth were not ours but belonged to others, square-state-nation-land, anybody's with a few pennies in his pocket.

Rivers, chimneys, industries, houses, chaotic expansions, the conquest of modern man: new dimensions paid for at the price of jeopardizing everything.

Pathetic clouds gilded by the sun, detached from this ruin and squalor.

Plowed fields, well ordered, with trees: Virgilian memories of an old agrarian community, where the gods sat at the hearth with men.

Roads, great and small, roads that try to sew together the jumbled mosaic of this dear old earth of ours.

Different people on this earth. In derby hat, cutaway, and cravat as though the road led only to the drawing-room; dressed in a colorful costumes, ready for the Sunday parade on a folkloristic holiday, when the village band is playing. With crash helmets on their heads, in their racing cars, in an endless maze. Savages round the fire, sacrificing the prettiest maiden in the village to the god of rain.

All this simultaneously in the year 1961.

And you town planners want to plan the same cities for men so different, strangers and enemies to one another, owing to biological destiny, and beyond the power of their will? Do you think bees and mice and ants and lions can live in the same type of house, in the same type of city?

That is what is so sad about man, that he is still so alone and scared and full of taboos on this earth, still so close to primeval chaos!

Then we see the earth the way it will be in the future.

The anonymous earth that belongs to all, that belongs to men who are reconciled, reconciled to themselves, to other men, to things, reconciled to their earth!

A mason has just entered my study to ask for some explanations. An intelligent young man. He loves his work. What an awful thing to be an intellectual!

Do you think the mason would understand that a city does not exist and yet exists at the same time? I wouldn't know. Or, yes, I could answer the question, but in an ambiguous way. I have often talked to this mason. Especially three or four years ago, when he first began working for me. I remember how happy he was to work on a new modern building, with new spaces, and materials that were all new to him!

When I remember that, I can honestly say: "Yes, I could talk with him about this city. Most certainly he would understand me." But then I remember him, when some experiment we were trying did not turn out right. He shook his head. "That's just not possible," he must have thought. And when I think of that, I withdraw within myself, like a turtle into its shell and I tell myself: "No, he cannot see Earth-City, our Earth-City, which belongs to him too."

Well, reader, and you? You who are reading these pages at this moment? Who are you? Are you like the mason at the moment when he believes me or at the moment when he shakes his head? I can't tell.

On the other hand I don't want you either to believe or to refuse to believe. I expect neither credulity nor doubt.

When I look at this table, touch the wood, the pen, the pack of cigarettes, the lamp that burns my hand: all this is less real than our city.

But the table exists, and so do the pen, the cigarette, and the lamp. While our city is still suspended in my heart, the heart of an anonymous man, in the breasts of all the anonymous men of the world in this twentieth century!

I feel almost like getting high, talking to you like a drunk who mixes up everything: reality, dream, memory, desire. Sometimes it is marvelous to be drunk and talk.

And it is beautiful, too, to listen to a drunk. Everything becomes ambiguous. Everything is true, and everything is false.

Nothing is separate any longer; everything is unified. Look, you can no longer say: "This is city, this is countryside. This is one piece of property, that is another piece of property. This is a church, that is a gasoline station. This is an old city, that is a highly modern one. This is a house for workingmen, with many stories, that is a private villa with swimming pool and tennis court."

What you see now is one single composition. Here it is more serried, there more open.

Here it is more plastic; there, more colored. Here more dramatic; there, gentler.

And you may ask: But what has happened? Does the city no longer exist? Or the roads? Or the houses?

No, dear friend, they no longer exist. There still are cities, if you want to put it that way, but at the same time there are no cities. There are roads, but they are no longer roads. There are houses, but they are no longer houses!

I see you are giving me a strange look, as though you were an imbecile or I were one. You are stunned. So I tell you: "Let's get closer, at any point. Wherever you want. You choose. At random." We are coming closer.

Do you see now? We have arrived at a place that is well known to you and to me. Do you remember this place? Do you remember? Do you remember, reader?

We were children then.

Here was the river, and the houses here on the river banks, and here the old city walls had become public gardens where the soldiers used to go for a Sunday stroll; and over there was the open country.

Here was the main avenue with the most elegant shops. Over there was a dark little square, for romantic lovers.

And there the sea. With all the little boats pulled up ashore at night, waiting!

And houses, houses. Ever so many houses.

That one, beautiful, big, rich, isolated in the midst of a stately park even though in the center of town. Our friend George used to live there.

That other one, hideous and even bigger, with so many holes for windows: on the fifth floor—remember?—Josephine used to live there, that beautiful blonde, savage child of the people, of disturbing beauty.

And so on, and so on, and so on.

Do you remember?

You are smiling, reader, you really remember.

Because this was our city.

But today it is no longer the same. If we look hard enough, we'll find that something of the past still exists: the most beautiful houses of that time, those that testify to man's history and to his adventures on this earth. But they too are different now. They are part of another whole that is ours, at last. Oh reader, my reader friend, how nice it would be to get sentimental!

To remember ourselves there, leaning against the wall of that tall palace with its tower: where we kissed our girl, with our heart in our throat; over there, in that café, in the armchairs with their red velvet upholstery, where together we laid the foundations for a whole new world; there, at the hospital on the hill, where our father died; and over there, in that castle, where our baby daughter was born.

Long memories recording our presence in a thousand lands, all written about, testified to, even if only by a smile or a scream in the night!

All this no longer exists.

Space is no longer separate. Space is integrated.

Here there used to be a cliff. When the north wind blew, it was impossible to stand on the river bank, except behind that cliff. The automobile road went along the brink high above the sea—how hard it had been for men to build it!—and then the houses, each one for itself.

And, to the west, the open sea. Now everything is different.

Something that is no longer road or pier or houses emerges from the hill and extends into the sea, delimiting part of it, keeping it quiet and without waves.

The old world seems infantile, when you remember it now: a world of men good only for making additions. This is the road. Road + house. Road + five houses. Road + one thousand houses. Lined up one next to the other. Façade after façade, in different styles, different face make-ups of the period. At times the road widens out and becomes a square, and the square + houses + office buildings + church + market, becomes the heart of the city. True, at times a good deal of fantasy has gone into a single place, but it is a limited fantasy, closed within itself.

Now, instead, everything is full of fantasy and invention.

The road has become house, and the house, road. The house has grown legs and has married the mountain, and the mountain, too, is house. The house has entered the sea, and the boats are moored at its doors. And the airplanes rest on the water, like big sleeping seagulls.

And you can no longer separate one thing from another.

Constructions follow the river beds, down to the river mouths. They go over the river like suspension bridges; they surge toward heaven like mountain peaks; they ease themselves down the slopes like a corn field or condense like giant sequoia.

The city is free.

Look: a lover no longer has to take his girl out of the city, miles and miles, for a moment of peace and solitude. He walks on the new constructions, he stops at night, face to face with the stars, while two hundred feet below his little brother sleeps, and father smokes his pipe and mother closes her day after a last look at her tasks. During his free hours and on holidays, the workingman can see the air-

planes he himself has produced, coming out of his factory like good fresh bread from the oven, ready to take off from the runway, splendid geometry on the green turf; and he stretches out comfortably on a soft colored form that absorbs the weight of his body. In the free space in front of the habitations, as in an arena in front of the rising tiers of spectators, men talk about their existence. Images of what is going on in the world pass through the air and are present.

Machines of air, water, and land take off to do their duty.

The world is present. The world is present to itself.

Means of transportation are of a different kind, and people's thoughts are of a different kind. No longer private cars, nor collective buses. But single elements, communicating among themselves more freely. Roads that move by themselves, horizontally, vertically, jointing the ganglia of their own composition.

To shop, rest, sleep, wake up, make love, go to work, have regained their old meaning in a new way: free for all, without slavery.

Human beings have become like bees. Bees that carry pollen from flower to flower without knowing why or what they are doing: but yet aware of carrying the pollen to strange flowers of strange trees and strange worlds: and they are happy to stay in this world, useful and used without knowing why.

A new eucharist exists among men, if you want to put it that way; but it is no longer concentrated and limited to a revealed truth, but spread out, expanded to all the things in this world in the process of being. Man has found the reason, root and branch, for his staying together in peace. And death no longer engenders fear on earth. The black sickle of death has remained in the ancient museums, to testify to all the fears and all the taboos of man with which our ancestors had to live and survive.



I have fever today, and I feel ill. Some years ago I would have asked myself why. But now I know that it is this staying alone, alone within the solitude, even of our physical distress that does not concern anyone. And also today, though in full awareness of this new world and therefore happy, I am alone in my study in this enchanted world, lifted out of communication with other things. But tomorrow this will no longer be so. Tomorrow I should no longer have to write this book. I would stay up here and watch the children playing below, and the machines working the fields, the flower beds, and the marvelous birds of man that furrow the air.

Once upon a time the life of men was restricted to the small community.

Now not only the city, but even the section of town, even the neighborhood, and even the family has become the whole earth!

Vision! Yes, I see. Without effort, as if what I saw already had been enacted and become part of my day.

This sun, which in its course no longer shines on separate things, divided from one another. This sun that shines, now and for ever, on one single composition that belongs to all!

I see, I see even the details.

These constructions are industrialized. And yet they are different one from another. They have the freshness of a piece of red-hot iron, just out of the rolling mill, the personality of a tree rising from a given earth, in contact with certain rocks and certain forms around it. And in one place it is warmer and in another it is colder; in one place the construction is higher, in another lower, and these variations are born of changing climes and topographies.

They are alive; what today we call houses, prisons in which our lives are canned, now they are alive. Where the earth is all red and desert, they are bleached by the scorching sun, and they breathe like plants at night. And where the earth is flat and sad they rise like mountains to

offer to all the sight of distant horizons. And where there is the sea, they have become like boats that float in the calm harbor at night.

What more do we want of urbanism and of architecture?

And no one knows who the architect was. An architect set out from the desert land and began to build, and another one, after him, set out from this construction in the desert land and went on building. Occasionally he felt as if trapped in the buildings and then he built over them with other constructions, like a bridge. And others turned their course and linked them to the river. And from the river, another architect pushed them to the sea. And at one point that construction is free and vibrating like a wing. And at that other point it is like a block of granite. According to the truths and needs of man.

Everything is changed. There are no longer rooms. No bedrooms. No furniture in the old sense. Man has found again the sense of nature. He lives in these habitations the way he once lived in the forest glade; and sleeps as once he slept in the sheltering cave, there, where it is softest. The foundations are no longer foundations, holes in the ground. The earth has been furrowed as though with a plowshare.

Roads and bridges and habitations, having become one, rise naturally from the earth.

I am tired and have to stop and rest. I have been motionless for a long while, like a Zen monk. But my eyes were not turned inward, in contemplation. My eyes were turned toward the outside world, toward the hill of Fiesole and the plain of Florence. Before my eyes I had this famous landscape: the convent of Saint Francis, of Saint Dominic. The *badia* of Fiesole, the Villa Medici. More to the right, Villa Salviati, the churches of Florence with their belfries and the cupola of the cathedral, and farther in the distance, beyond the Arno, the hills of Belvedere and Boboli and San Miniato al Monte. Rightly famous is

this scene! For it is rare to see culture and history, architecture and landscape, thought and earth merged so harmoniously in a Pythagorean circle, split lightly by the river like an axis, and the opening of the valley to the right, toward the sea! And whoever wanted to hold and keep this Florence secretly in his heart and conserve it like a relic unchangeable, crystallized in time for ever and ever, certainly would not be wrong: such a sacrilege it would be to destroy this beauty, this harmonious movement composed by man in an era of his history.

But without any intention on my part, without my even being aware of it, this untouchable landscape has slowly changed before the eyes of this casual witness. Other things reveal their outlines on the hill crests, unfamiliar forms are born. From the woods, now gilded with dead leaves, unfamiliar structures rise toward heaven, have moved along the ridge, surrounded the convent, have descended along the terraces, swayed as though they were tired, then flowed gently along the slope toward the plain, met the uncertain and chaotic magma of the periphery, engulfed it, and new walls, filled with space, have again enclosed the ancient center, stretched like the tentacles of a polyp along the ridges beyond the Arno, then to rush headlong down other valleys toward the sea; they have kept on moving past the horizon, to continue their march over the whole earth. What was—what was still valid for us as history, tradition, culture, memories of our ancient blood reaching back to the roots of mankind—that has remained. Nothing we love and cherish has been destroyed. But a new life blood runs through its veins, a new vitality has invaded it.

The values of past times have been put into circulation again, not crystallized forever.

My eyes see, and see the world of today. They see the egotism of those who are buying the villas of the princes where there is no longer anything princely; they see the theft of the silence of a time that is not theirs but that of friars enclosed in their ivory towers; they see the lie of

a faith in a Christian God, evaporated through the sharp points of bell towers, which not even the Renaissance and Humanistic fullness of the cupola was able to hold; they see the tiredness and the skepticism of men, bent on an involuntary flight from the city, through the noise of motors and wheels; they see the non-hope (were it despair, at least!) of the inhabitants of this ancient city which once was so lively and famous.

And I, too, in this observatory on the hill facing Fiesole, caught in the lie of trying to save some of the substance of modern man, remain imprisoned in this sense of what is mine which has no longer any meaning: this "mine" with regard to the history of the past, to the crisis of today; this flower of "mine," which has struck its fine roots in my heart. But by now these new and unfamiliar structures have involved me too; one of their branches has set out through the narrow rocky valley, has confronted me from about 150 feet below where I now am, and then resumed its march.

And so my eyes see, see the tomorrow, when no one defends anything because there are no longer personal values to defend, and the roots of the flower in my heart have grown out of my body, have branched off into the hearts of others, and all of us are together. My eyes see today's tomorrow.

This hill of solid rock barely scratched till now by the hand of man, is now as if exploded.

The houses no longer rest on the external surface like small or big stones, barely hollowed. Space has penetrated everything, and air and earth are in total symbiosis, no longer opposed and antagonistic. Men are no longer enclosed. There, in front of me, there are my friends, who until yesterday were the prisoners and slaves of their walls. Those friends whom I only rarely see: so isolated we are even though we live barely 600 feet (as the crow flies) from one another.

Now things are different. Dressed the way I am, in a suit that is not destined now for the home and now for

the others but simply a "necessary" or "necessitated" suit, I step down a few steps, open the door, am transported to my friends, see all their children play together. The water has risen up the mountains, and on the mountains the children are splashing about in the water, the fruits of the earth are in contact with man; and I can go quickly, with neither effort nor boredom, to my friends. We smile at one another and walk through a part of Earth-City.

The car has become a friend. Man is a nomad, but he is also settled. To wake up, rise, work, eat and go to sleep have all become natural actions, without fears and without taboos. Men are like birds and can fly effortlessly. Just like the birds they perch on the electric wires. To work is no longer fatiguing. Plowing, cooking, rummaging in office files—such things no longer exist. It is as if the earth plowed itself, as if food were gathered from the bread tree, as if the organization of life had become a natural phenomenon that happens just as it happens that the sun's rays light the earth.

And the vision continues.

Suspended in midair, able to fly as we often are in our dreams, capable of continuous alternate motion from the general to the particular, we could go on in our vision for a long time. Just as we could also stop and wait. Wait like old grandfathers, for our sons and grandchildren to incarnate what we could only see. There is no hurry anyway.

For us Earth-City exists already, outside of vision, because it has struck roots in the breasts of men, of Anonymous (20th Century). Rain and sun and human intervention will bring about the birth of this plant of all, because the heart of every human being, whether he be aware of it or not, longs for the arrival of this Earth-City, so necessary to him.

## Town Planning: Practical Action

As an architect, I can criticize current town-planning policies, analyze certain methods that to me seem right; I can see and describe certain aspects of a new urbanism; but I am not in a position to discuss the methods of enacting these policies, because such a discussion would necessarily carry me into the field of politics. It is there, in the last analysis, that the fate of our cities is decided.

And since the political and social conditions of every nation are different, the methods and possibilities of enacting town-planning policies should also be different. Since I am more familiar with the Italian situation, I might discuss a possible methodology for Italy; but my book is addressed also to foreign readers.

On the other hand, it seems to me dangerous to evade this problem altogether; for I should not want anybody to come up with this elementary question: "This is all fine; but how are we to translate into reality what has been said here about urbanism?"

The statesman or politician, in my opinion, has not yet undertaken the re-examination of values that other men in other fields have accomplished long since. When there is a political crisis in this world, people believe that it can be solved by changing policy. But the figure of the

political man as such has not been brought into question so far.

Let me explain. The politician still moves on a terrain of myths, not of existential realities. When mankind has acquired a collective existential consciousness, then there will no longer be any need for politicians, because the act of governing will be nothing but the automatic result of the acts of individuals. Unfortunately we are still a long way from such a situation. Yet we can already imagine the politician, not as a sower or enacter of ideas, but as a man who, with scientific methods, tries to extract the maximum good for the citizens within the conditions prevailing in a given historical situation.

In such a situation we should witness a rapid transformation of this world; because nations and peoples would no longer be at war, in order to impose on one another their conceptions and ideas; we should be at peace, because social transformation would take place on concrete bases which, if they could not be demonstrated, could at least be analyzed beyond the limits of personal opinions.

To enact a certain policy of town planning means, in one word, to plan. Does planning mean planning from above? Or planning from below? Does it mean, to plan in a demagogical, dictatorial way, solving all problems by imperial fiat, by decision of a new, modern *deus ex machina*?

Or does planning mean the planning of some sort of trust that tries to solve the problems for all?

Is planning to be done by the general or by the saint, by the great industrialist or by the political party?

As far as I am concerned, there seems to exist only one type of legitimate planning today: the planning suggested by man's collective intelligence at whatever point it may have reached during a given historical period. The only kind of planning that is possible is, if you want to put it that way, of a technical order.

Hence it is the task of the politician to coordinate, as best he can, the individual plans of the technicians.

In certain other fields politicians have been forced to act in this way. Let us take the spectacular example of the missiles and artificial satellites.

When mankind was faced with the possibility of leaving the earth's orbit, first only with instruments, then with living beings, the nations best prepared from the scientific and economic point of view had to do some planning.

Different nations, of course, have employed different methods: one may have created only one organ, another, more; but the important thing was to provide the scientist with such conditions that he could do his research freely. The scientist, to put it plainly, remained always a scientist, even if as a citizen he might hold different political opinions.

But the prestige of the nation was at stake. The nation had to have at its disposal extraordinary weapons, in case of emergency. Billions were spent, even if the people had to tighten their belts; but it is certain that today, if not man himself, at least something of man's, has arrived on the moon. So the sacrifice has borne its fruit.

Now I don't see why nations should not behave the same way when it comes to urbanism. The problem is there: to give modern man his city. Broadly speaking, we have the means at our disposal today to demonstrate the current conditions that men have to face in our cities, to make a thorough analysis, and to reach our conclusions.

From a certain point of view, men might be proud of themselves today. It is incredible how the standard of living has gone up. An average worker today enjoys a standard of living that five hundred years ago would have been beyond the reach even of the Medici banker-princes of Florence. Houses are heated; they have electric light, running cold and hot water. But then, there is the other side, to put a damper on our pride. The average man today lives in a desolate, squalid environment, surrounded



by objects that are not genuine and kill in him any possibility of inner sublimity. What this average man does is less spontaneous, less in keeping with things, less religious, than what the average man was able to do in ancient times. We see that, in those countries in which individual and collective wealth has reached the highest level, human life is less simple, more artificial, less joyous. This is clearly shown by certain statistics.

And this means that in his striving man has forgotten, or neglected, certain constant values.

And if it is true that a political man seeks the good of the people to whom he belongs, by whom he has been elected, and whom he represents, he should pride himself not only upon the achievement of reaching the moon with rockets but also upon the demonstration that his nation has created a new way of life, a new tradition, a new civilization, a new city.

If the problem is thus put in correct terms, I don't see why it should be more difficult to achieve our city than it is today to reach the moon.

These things are quite simple, after all. There are so many billions and millions of people on this earth. The natural and artificial resources at man's disposal are measurable. It is in the context of these conditions that our city must and can be built.

This is not yet happening. But we should not be too disappointed. It is merely a question of time. The moment will come when urbanistic policy and architecture will dovetail.

How strange is human life!

To be able to put your finger on an evil, to diagnose it, to suggest the remedies, and yet to be unable to cure the patient! Impossible! But it *should* be possible!

But at this point everybody minds his own business. Urbanists and architects, frustrated in their hopes, prevented from genuinely expressing their possibilities, with-

draw, each one minding his own business, adopting different means, according to each one's character.

This is the bitter truth: there are capable architects who are blocked from action. There is, in other words, an enormous human capital that does not pay, nor can it pay, any interest. A passive capital! A productive machine that produces nothing, or is forced to produce badly.

A new world is being born from the periphery, I tell myself, is being born of the humble work of all, of the countless vital and anonymous acts of anonymous men. Be confident. Earth-City has been born already, is in the process of being. If, among all the things I have said, I have said some well, or even if I have said them all badly but yet in such a way as to let certain truths filter through, that means that these truths are already in the air. They are alive and vital at this moment. Or else I could not have noticed them, unless I were more than a human being.

But people will ask: And how is this Earth-City to be translated into reality without waiting for the morrow?

Do not worry! Today, yes, today!

Yes, today as yesterday, yesterday as ever, today as tomorrow. Because continuity is never broken, in the march of men.

And let this be said without fatalism, merely through the logical consequence of things.

But not only that. There is much more to it.

Enormous forces exist and are at work today, facilitating the building of this city and bringing it nearer. Forces no one would have suspected, forces not apparent to anyone, but existing in reality. Forces existing in a positive sense, if you wish, and also in a negative one. Take technology, for example. This technology, cut off, apparently, from the spiritual, seems to act negatively on the construction of Earth-City.

And yet this is not so. Technology, with all its possibilities, facilitates the construction of our Earth-City. On the level of thought, it seems to act in an inverse sense, but this is only because there are still people around who be-

lieve in a world of the spirit as separate from the world of matter. But when this antinomy no longer exists (as in reality it does not exist even today, except in the minds of some of us), when people understand at last that in the departure of a rocket, for example, there is as much of spirituality, of religious experience, and of transcendence as in the descent of the Holy Ghost on the heads of the Apostles; when people understand that the auto-motion of a tram presents as much of a miracle as, for example, the transmutation of bread and wine into Christ's body, then technology will have become the best of our friends.

And all the many, infinitely many things that today seem divergent to us, will become convergent to our observing minds. Some one has invented a new material: and Earth-City has come that much closer. Another one has staged a revolution to free part of mankind in a faraway nation from a feudal regime: and Earth-City has come that much closer. A third one has discovered an antidote against a certain disease: and Earth-City has come that much closer. All that a fourth one may have done is to put together two pieces of wood in a new way: and Earth-City has come that much closer.

Therefore Earth-City already exists. Underground, perhaps. And now it is sprouting into the sunlight, so that men may become aware of it. What more do you want from life?

We architects operate in the field of urbanism and architecture. If I have been clear, we should now be aware of the fact that, no matter what we do, the things that have to happen will happen. Earth-City, accordingly, is coming. But *how* it is going to come—that depends in part on us. Even the urbanists and architects who, at this moment, are building frightful things, are working for the coming of this City. If only by exposing errors, and the impossibility of going on along these lines. The day will come when man, having revolted, rejected slavery, and conquered freedom in the political and social field, will revolt against slavery

and for freedom also in his city, in his neighborhood, in his houses. And this will imply a kind of war.

And war means that someone will die, someone will be wounded, someone will suffer. But since it is an injustice to kill, to wound, and to cause suffering because we are unable to substitute one thing for another, the future for the present, the beyond for the here and now, or an anticipated here and now for the current here and now, I think that we have very great responsibilities. We architects, being no longer able to create myths, must have a clear and watchful awareness of what we are doing. We cannot make a revolution first, conquer power first, and then try to do our best. As long as we want to stage revolutions and conquer power, we shall be architects, and therefore human beings, of an antiquated mentality and attitudes. Our only possibility is to be involved in things, trying to be as coherent as possible.

Today, maybe, we are called to talk to a cabinet minister; tomorrow, to deliver a lecture; the day after, to design a housing project; the day after that, to teach; another day, to build a villa. We must do these things as best we can, approaching Earth-City as closely as possible, always aware that what we are doing is not eternal, that it will contain both truth and error, that the situation within which we are working is false, and that, consequently, the things we are doing must be wrong in part.

But we are coming always closer to reality.

Quite practically speaking.

An architect is called to make a certain thing, for the time being. Large or small as it may be, this thing stands on the crust of the earth. On this piece of the earth's crust, some men are living. All that matters is to provide these men with as little suffering and as much joy as possible with the means at the disposal of an architect. Hence we have to examine carefully the components engendering these things. The more responsible, the more expert we are about these components, the more happiness and the less suffering our building will engender.

Slowly, slowly, all these little pieces of earth—understood, loved, interrelated, existentialized, if I may say so—will touch one another, then grow together to create one single tissue, and will form Earth-City.

There are so many billions of people on earth. Among these billions of men there are so many thousands of professional architects, that is, men who build. If these architects were conscious of Earth-City at every moment in their work, Earth-City would come about quickly, naturally, without wars, without theories and counter-theories; thanks to everybody, it would come to light anonymously. This essential and true and vital Earth-City, it too would be Anonymous (20th Century).

To achieve Earth-City with the least possible loss of time and energy, we must move along two lines: one is, so to speak, of a social and political order, in which we architects participate basically just as citizens; the other is of a more specific character, in which we have to engage as professional men, that is, as architects.

This means that we have to act at the center, trying to render the central organs of our nation more dynamic, more in step with history; but at the same time we have to work at the periphery, trying in our daily work not to betray our consciences.

Each one of these spheres of action has its validity and its necessity. And each one carries within itself a charge of truth and hope as well as one of fatigue and despair. Each one involves the architect in his daily efforts, just as it involves the efforts of all men working in their different fields.

If we want to achieve our City, we must try gently to transform the structure of our society until it adapts itself to our new vital exigencies; but, at the same time, we must know that there is no *deus ex machina* to solve our problems right away, and thus we must work at the periphery, transforming the world step by step, and demonstrating day by day, by specific achievements even within the limits

imposed by reality on our work, that a new possibility of life does exist and that in our constructions people can live better, with greater freedom and imagination.

And slowly, slowly, thanks to the contributions of all, what may seem chimerical today will become reality for all.

What matters is that none of us give way to easy betrayals, for the sake of immediate gain, but that we live up to the truths life has taught us and history entrusted to us, to transmit to other generations.

In the last analysis, reactionary forces exist because people are afraid to give up a good which they possess for the sake of another which they do not yet possess; just as progressive forces exist because people hold a certain good to be no longer good and desire another one, even if it be illusory or unlikely to be attained.

Only when mankind becomes fully aware of the common need, of the common good, will Earth-City be achieved.

## On Architecture

If the ashes of a volcanic eruption were to cover all the earth, as they once did Pompeii and Herculaneum, and a thousand years from now men were to uncover our buried cities, what could they think of us, of our way of life as revealed through the architecture of our century?

But we don't need volcanic ashes to find out. All we have to do is to review the history of modern architecture, and we shall see what variety, confusion, and dispersion there are, also what ferment, invention, and desire in the heart of twentieth-century mankind.

As in every other field, so in the history of architecture, there have been more changes in the sixty years of the twentieth century than in the time from man's appearance on earth up till 1900.

No wonder there is confusion today. This should not scare us. But now it is time to take our bearings in this adventurous navigation and to find out what harbor we want to reach and what direction we are to take, even if the harbor, owing to an inner dynamism which has become a necessary aspect of our lives, were a floating one, constantly changing place; even if it were peculiar to our era that we should wander endlessly, new Odysseuses, without any Penelope awaiting us at home; even if our house should have become a boat that we could steer without aiming at any port or any home, inasmuch as boat, harbor, and house have become one single thing: the earth on which we live.

From the critic's point of view the present situation of

applied architecture seems clear. Everything has been analyzed, catalogued, specified. There are in circulation all sorts of publications on modern architecture: easy reference books for the general public, weeklies, dailies, bring the news about modern architecture to every home.

The tendencies of the architects who preceded us have been explained and catalogued, as well as those of the architects currently in vogue. The names with which these various styles are defined echo even from the walls of the living rooms of middle-class homes.

Eclecticism, expressionism, functionalism, rationalism, organicism, structuralism, brutalism, and so on and so forth. These have become familiar words in the conversation of many who do not really know what they mean.

My head is ringing with the names of the architects who have made the modern era of architecture, and, back on the retina of my eyes, I have imprints of the pictures of their buildings, in their amazing diversity. Bewildered by this vision, I ask myself what it is that distinguishes this architecture of ours from ancient architecture.

And at this point the images take on precision.

I see, for instance, a tall skyscraper. So many skyscrapers together, forming a great city—New York, for example. And I ask myself: what is modern in this picture?

The dimension, certainly, I tell myself. The human scale has changed, and this by itself is an innovation. The fact, too, that the sum total of these skyscrapers is a new landscape. They are more valid if taken together than as individual buildings. But for the rest, it is all terribly ancient: the space, which has been sliced into so many stories; the structure, in which steel has simply been used to replace wood, rather than as a new means of expression, as, for instance, in an airplane carrier; and the internal distribution of apartments or offices or whatever they are. The glass walls cannot fool us about this fact. They are like shirts, different from those used in the past, but still shirts: shirts of metal and glass rather than of bricks and cement. More sensible, because they weigh less: but still they are



shirts that you could take off and replace with others, according to the fashion of the time. And it seems to me that the externals of any architecture should be the coherent consequence of the internals, and should not be changeable at pleasure.

Then, in contrast, you think of a horizontally extended structure—the housing unit of Marseilles, to take the very best example—and you ask yourself what is modern in it. And here matters present themselves somewhat more favorably. Besides the dimension, you notice that new elements have come into play: the street enters into the house, the house is raised from the ground, and also the single apartments, arranged in “duplex,” attempt a new adventure in space. The structure itself becomes expressive. And you feel almost happy at having found something that is really ours. But after a moment, sadness grips you again. You realize that the building has been conceived in a neo-classical way; it still wants to be a monument, with a perspective center of a Renaissance type; you realize that man’s liberty is woefully limited, and the inhabitant is even more of a slave than ever, restricted as he is within this human hive. You realize that this form is an aesthetic production, an intellectual creation, without existential truth unfolding from the reality intrinsic in the object.

As a reaction against this feeling, you begin to think of a church; Gaudí’s church, for example at Santa Coloma de Cervellò. And for a moment you think you have again found human liberty, even though still in Romantic guise. Here is a thing, at last, free in its form, born of man’s fantasy and not merely of his reason. But after a little while you run off in disgust, barring the inner door of your eyes against the intrusion of such images. Because, apart from certain purely decorative elements, there is really nothing in this architecture that could be called ours, and even those things you hopefully considered modern, such as, for instance, the inclined rampant arches, which seemed to create a new type of space, turn out to be importations

from ancient India and have nothing to do with our multi-dimensional space.

At this point you begin to react. You react against this sort of anarchy and you wish to see something more precise, more social, more industrialized. And there, in the back of your eyes, appear the buildings of the "international style." Here, at least, the methods of research on which they are based seem to belong to our own time. You take a breath. Yes, you say, here at least there is a direction, there is something humbler and more truthful that belongs to all. But after you have walked around a bit in one of those buildings, your heart sinks, because you find that this type of architecture betrays its own principles: the structural elements, that is, are less pure than in other types of architecture, and the cost of building is no lower. The so-called panels are of an artisan type, not industrialized, and the materials are the usual ones; you realize that the details are sophisticated and formalized.

So you move on, looking for other things, typical pieces of architecture, free, not conditioned by the client, by financial speculation. Perhaps you should seek the villa of some private individual if you want to have a breath, at last, of what commonly used to be called poetry.

And, in fact, in some individual villa of some individual architect you find some of the things you are looking for. You find a freer structure, a dynamic articulation of space, a more fluid distribution, a more organic integration of inner and outer space, a more expressive form, more closely adhering to the intrinsic reality of the various organisms. But your happiness is of short duration, because you realize that what we are looking for is our City, not the favorite and sophisticated dish of some privileged personality.

And so the image shifts again, and you see great dams and superhighways, and you say: Here at last is something that has the dimension, the force, and the truthfulness of our century. Things that are honest and genuine even if elementary. But then you begin to think that man is more

complete than that, that he is not all muscles and skin and bones, but that the brain and the heart within this structure have other desires, that they expect other things that belong to them.

And then you look among those pieces of architecture which, in their structures, have something of the forcefulness and genuineness of the dam or the superhighway, but contain other elements besides: a big stadium, an indoor sports arena. And for a moment you rest in the contemplation of the beauty and purity of some such structures. But after a little while you tell yourself: a jet plane also offers these characteristics, and in addition, it has the power to move; but not even that is enough for man.

And then your thought hunts after another image: a construction, perhaps, of a more regional, provincial character, but more intimate and more truthful. Stone, solid stone and wood; and a space on a more human scale. But so great is the boredom of remembering a false paradise lost that the refreshing pause is brief.

To conclude: all the types of architecture representative of our age pass through your head; well known, too well known by now to all of us, whether through direct experience or through photos and designs published in magazines and books on architecture; and you are aware of the great individual contributions made by a great number of architects to modern architecture. You are aware of these to the point of feeling proud of our time, of what we have achieved.

But this feeling of satisfaction does not last, because at the end, you ask yourself again: Among so many things and experiments and contributions, what is the lowest common denominator on the basis of which a piece of architecture can be called modern, that is, ours?

In the last analysis there remain only two things which really belong to us: a new structural possibility permitting a new freedom of expression; and a new conception of space, identifiable as a new constant in architecture.

And if volcanic ashes were really to bury our cities, our descendants, unearthing them, would say: The men of the twentieth century did not create a new city, they had no new way of life, they did not create new organisms and types of housing, but they invented new structural possibilities, and, above all, they invented a new type of space, or, to put it more precisely, they destroyed the conceptual space of the architects that had preceded them and tried to create a new space and to relate it to all the other existing spaces.

So we have found two safe points on which to focus our attention: space and structure. And since space and structure constitute the basis of any architecture at any time, we can be satisfied, because we can say in good conscience that the architecture of the twentieth century has acquired quite specific characteristics.

But somehow we feel that this is not enough.

If we think, again, of the vision of the city, we realize that our true adventure has not even begun.

Now I remember two facts, one seen, the other imagined.

I remember a medieval print of the Colosseum. On that giant structure with its rows of steps, houses had been built. Into that structure, which, at that time, represented industrialization, measure, schematization, rationalization, the Christians had inserted their houses, houses brought forth by life, irrational changeable houses. I saw something similar in a Roman theater in France, where the houses were still there, and I remember that, apart from the materials, apart from the space, this casual aspect of a living architecture within a rigid context—all these houses that became one single house—seemed to me so much more modern than anything we are building today.

And I remember a dam on the Colorado River in the U.S.A. Gigantic, this dam, and on top of it, the superhighway; and the artificial lake mirroring the red rocks of the mountains. Farther away, remote from the water, not sharing in that stupendous nature and in that grandiose work of man, there was one of the usual American villages:

wooden houses, without character; a perfect bore. And I asked myself how it was possible that the same men who had built the dam had also built that sad-looking middle-class village. I asked myself why this cement dam had not pushed itself towards heaven, to carry, above the super-highway, houses for these men, in one single organic composition; and how it could have happened that this structure, made of houses, at the point where the dam closes the valley and the road turns left, should not instead have turned right, to go around the sunny part of the lake; and why it should not have pushed some tentacles into the water, so that boats and steamers could moor at the doors of the houses.

It seemed such an ideal place to try a new way of life for men. The landscape was beautiful, the surrounding nature was beautiful; there was the superhighway, and there was the water. There were all the elements for the creation of a new paradise on earth: an oasis in a desert that man had revitalized with the miracle of the water.

But nothing of the sort had happened. And I asked myself at some length why not. Offhand it seemed to me that no economic obstacle would have stood in the way of this marvelous project. The over-all cost certainly would have been lower. Nor could there have been a technical obstacle. A greater weight on the dam, I told myself, would have improved the static conditions.

So there was no reason, as far as I could see, except lack of imagination: lack of that same imagination that had created palaces on the waters of Venice and shops on its bridges.

These are only two examples, to illustrate further what I have already indicated in the chapter on town planning: examples that I could multiply *ad lib*. So often have these images arisen in my mind that I could easily design them, and often I feel tempted to paint the feeling of this new city.

Things must be born from pulsing realities, not from ideas in the heads of men.

Let us change our way of life, and architecture will change by itself, beyond the control of our will.

Sometimes, when I set out on a certain architectural reasoning, I realize that the possibility exists.

The act of projecting, after all, consists of two moments: receiving and giving back.

First comes the moment of receiving.

Things are received, received from others.

When a certain problem is presented to us for solution, we receive, together with the problem, a number of important elements for its solution—if we are capable of grasping them. Not only specific, technical elements, which constitute the constants of the problem; but elements of another nature, more hidden, engendering a series of questions which the architect must answer.

This is the phase in which the architect is only a human being, not yet a specialized operator. The richer the humanity of this human being, the more complete will be the architect; and he will neglect none of the aspects of human life.

This is the phase during which the architect must not use his pencil or specify anything. It is the phase of conception. There is as yet neither flesh nor blood. It is the phase of love. The architect is like a lover who must give the utmost of himself to comprehend, to understand in its existential reality the object of his love. He must understand the object, that is, not the way he would like it to be, not the way he may think it to be, abstractly, but the way it is, the way it exists. And if the lover really understands the object of his love, and understands all the circumstances of the surroundings in which this object lives, then nothing will be strange and external to him on this night of conception—not the night itself with its stars or clouds; not the place in which he happens to be; not the thing, above all, that he holds tight in his arms, that he loves and is about to possess.

The lover will then have the mastery that he needs if the act of conception is to become a natural easy thing,

without taboos, without loss of consciousness on his part or on the part of the loved one; a necessary thing, in the last analysis, within the natural rhythm of existence.

I am not going to write any a priori treatise on love. What I want to say is that the architect will master the situation and the act of projecting thus will be a natural resultant of the elements that constitute the problem.

One of these component elements will be the site on which this determined piece of architecture is to rise. And the architect will spend much time examining it. He will measure it step by step, with his own body, until all the peculiarities of the place belong to him, have become part of him.

Another component will be the *raison d'être* of this building, including its *function*, as the rationalists call it, and which presents not only technical or mechanical aspects, but also subtler ones, regarding the lives of those who will live in the building.

And this *raison d'être*, or intrinsic justification of the object, will activate the architect's inventiveness, inducing him to imagine the type of space this object will need and what should be its relationship with the spaces and things around it; and thus the building will take on a precise form which cannot any longer be indistinct and standardized.

He will begin to envisage a type of building suitable to this particular object, which should not be merely the result of distributive analysis but should be based on a specific invention suited to this particular reality.

And he will begin to imagine the most suitable materials—suitable from every point of view: that is, they should cost as little as possible, suit the place, and yet permit the widest possible use of elements produced in series.

At this point the second phase sets in, the phase of giving, of gestation. And here the architect becomes both father and mother of his architecture, even if, in the last analysis, it will be the earth that will receive in its womb the fruit of his love and give blood and flesh to this creature.

And here the phenomenon of incarnation becomes as miraculous as ever: because the flesh and blood of a work of architecture are thousandfold.

Within the architect's mind a subtle image is taking shape which reaches from the earth through the structure, creating a space and enclosing a form which, altogether, will be like one living organism, adapted to those who will live in it. And for every moment of planning there will be a particular contact with the object which will give flesh and blood to the object itself.

By this I don't mean to say anything exceptional. Whatever the particular historical period, the architect has always reasoned more or less in this way. But today—save for rare exceptions and very few architects—a construction is the standard product of a standard reasoning. It is the result of a series of operations executed at a desk; it is the outcome of a commercial operation; and of the truth of man there is not even a trace.

The architect has become a sort of businessman who sells his standardized products as a merchant would sell his wares in a department store; often he does not know how to design himself, nor does he even know the designs drawn by his more or less specialized designers. It is about time to react against this state of affairs which is not only ruining the profession of the architect but threatening the integrity of the schools of design.

When, in congresses, lectures, and articles, architects and critics keep asking: "What will be the architecture of tomorrow?" I simply marvel; for, before he can answer such a question, an architect must first of all become an architect again.

In the chapter on the vision of Earth-City I tried, perhaps somewhat naïvely, to convey a tactile feeling of what this city will be like, starting from the general, from the earth as a whole. Now I should like to try to do the same, but starting from the particular.



I am going to start, that is, from the actions carried out by man on this earth.

Because only if we change these actions, will architecture also change, for basically architecture is nothing but an expression of the actions of men.

Here is a man waking up in the morning. He opens his eyes. Once more, this man sees the light, sees other men, women, and children. He sees the light after having been immersed in the unknown world of sleep. Every morning it is like issuing from the mother's womb, but with the full awareness of ourselves, and with the possibility of perceiving this world.

Light! The tree and its leaves, and the little birds that perch on its branches and sing. And the web the spider has woven during the night, kissed by the dew, impregnated by the sunshine. And his eyelids are still heavy.

Light! I raise my hand toward the sky, then I turn my head to the right. Hair flowing over the pillow, and as through a veil, a smile and the friendly wink of an eye. I feel movement. My leg moves under the sheet and, trembling, touches the body of the woman beside me.

Soon the air is filled with shouts and noises. Of all the people in the house. Going about their morning chores.

Man enters into the rhythm of his day. To pay his debt to the earth; as the earth does to man.

Man goes to work, that is, to build roads, bridges, houses, machines, and planes. And within the day this man carries out, accomplishes, a series of actions. A thousand different wonderful actions.

At night this man returns to the shadow realm of sleep.

It is up to the poet to describe the day, all the days of man.

It is up to the architect to make the actions of man come alive.

There are twenty-four hours in a man's day: one third is given to sleep, another third to work, still another third to his freedom. But all twenty-four are passed in contact

with the houses, the factories, the streets, the architecture of man.

What sense is there in waking up in a bedroom with closed shutters, antique furniture, flowery bedspread, a vase on the night table? What sense is there in eating in the dining room, the "good" one, with the table in the center, and the glass cabinets around, the sideboard that was a wedding gift? What sense is there in the living room, a "good" room too, for use on holidays? What sense, in these closed rooms, one after another, with all those doors that break up the space? What meaning, in those offices stuffed with papers—messy or neat ones, it does not matter which—on no matter what floor, in no matter what city? What meaning, in that factory building, with all those pieces of iron and materials of all sorts, where bolts and screws turn men for hours on end, the noise is deafening, and the eye may not rest on any genuine object? What meaning, in all these dead separate spaces wrenched from the world, in which man is losing his life twenty-four hours out of every twenty-four?

Was man born for that?

And were we architects born only to decorate, to dope this death, and render it more pleasurable, to pretty it, so that it may serve as an escape from our dead actions?

The city that will become Earth-City will no longer be a locked-in city. The house, too, will become Earth-house, and the house will no longer be locked in.

All conceptions that are behind present edifices must be eradicated and replaced by others that are alive and our own. More, indeed, has to be done than just changing the external form of a building! What do you mean when you say beauty? What does it matter to us? We must create organisms for ourselves.

Today the liberty of the architect is hemmed in by state organizations with antiquated rules and formulae. The conservative mentality of the authorities has not the slightest understanding of the future; the speculators remain anchored in the past against any risk; regulatory plans and

building regulations brake whatever innovating and creative impulse there may be. As long as this is the situation, we shall not be able to get out of this deadend road; we shall not be able to create anything new, to give new spaces to modern man.

But this is exactly why architects must fight; must even organize strikes and openly abstain from work, if necessary; for we carry a load of responsibility. In Earth-City the houses have started to move. What used to be isolated blocks, lined up one next to the other, have opened themselves, as it were, to catch the wind and move all over the earth.

But the house, too, has undergone a transformation. Just as it became impossible, in the city, to make a neat separation between street and house and square and green, so too, with the organism of the house itself. The house has exploded, and so have the factory and the school and the hospital.

Men circulate freely in these free and living spaces, and architects will no longer have to decorate dead spaces to make them bearable. Even furniture will no longer be what it is today: for, once man has arrived at the freedom of space, his needs will be elementary.

New images of houses rise in my vision. I have located them, too, so many times, in precise places, determined by landscape and climate.

I have seen houses rising from steep rocks as on giant skeletons, and in these skeletons the inhabitants themselves built their nest, as the birds do, without any need for an architect-decorator.

I have seen houses floating on the water, with a totally new space and new structures, spread out in the sun like an old Arab neighborhood. I have seen houses on the bridges of superhighways and on dams. I have seen factories insinuating themselves over and under the houses so that "to go to work" simply meant "to take a little stroll." In the plains I have seen houses as high as mountains—not homes built one on top of another as happens

in our skyscrapers today, but houses that contained open spaces where the children studied instead of going to school, where the sick were cured instead of being locked up in hospitals, where the old folks lived together with the others instead of being segregated in asylums.

On the twentieth floor, perhaps, there was the market, and on the thirtieth, the barber shop, and on the ground floor the movie theater or television or who knows what other devilish contraption for the reproduction and projection of images. And on the terrace, formed by a bridge between two units of the building, an orchestra was playing for all.

I have seen houses along the valley and the rivers, like rows of poplar trees. I have seen houses in the desert, transforming the desert into oases, with tomatoes and pink carnations grown by the inhabitants.

And the relation with the earth was new, and the relation with the air was new.

And it no longer made much difference whether one was a farmer or worker, mailman, engineer, or airplane pilot; for all these activities were integrated in this new architectural structure, so that the children were no longer taught from the printed page, but it was enough to explain to them the things that took place under their eyes, because all that men do on this earth was visible or brought directly into the homes by means of reproduction. I assure you that all this does not belong to the realm of fantasy. All this could be brought about *today*, with today's technical and economic means, within today's society.

This is not the sick fantasy of a romantic isolated individual, detached from the reality that surrounds him. Quite the contrary, it is the fruit of observation: of seeing the things that reality today has to offer and which I try to interrelate among themselves, giving them their true meaning.

And when I say Anonymous (20th Century) or, in this case, Anonymous Architect (20th Century), I do not mean a visionary, a utopian, a maniac. All I mean is an architect

who understands that, without the absurd frictions with which life penalizes those who fail to understand, it would be possible, and easy, to do things in the field of architecture that would arouse the admiration and the wonder of the men of the past if they could live again today, just as the planes, the missiles, and the great ships would make them marvel.

## My Architecture: A Self-Criticism

"Self-criticism." A fashionable word right now. Often misused. Self-criticism is really a marvelous thing, when it represents a sort of public confession; but it may also be a dirty thing, when it becomes a false and demagogic exhibition, without conviction and without reality. I hope that my self-criticism belongs to the former species.

I am forty-two years old. I have something to look back on.

I am not satisfied with myself.

I am an architect. To the marrow of my bones. And when I build or think of architecture, I feel I am in my element.

Space.

Oh, space! It is marvelous to take space into my hands, to work it with my fingers just as you work fresh dough to make good bread, to relate it to every living space that exists in space!

The space of the piece of architecture with the space of the people who are to live in it; with the space of the family's cat, its dog, the space of an ample armchair for the lady of the house, with the space of the sky outside, of the tree, the bird; with the space of a child's smile, with the space of my stomach, the space of my brain.

What a material!

To touch it! To caress it! To feel its living weight! The weight-force of gravitation! And the inverse weight with

which I charge the material to overcome the gravitational weight of the earth. To let it be born! Rock, iron, iron and glass together! And the stones are beautiful and strong and we sense their presence on earth prior to the birth of man. And the wrought iron has become exact form, impregnated with the labor and intelligence of man who has dominated matter. And glass. The glass that divides the air into two parts, but, at the same time, weds one part to the other. In winter the air inside is warm and pleasant and sweet, and the air outside is damp and cold. In summer, the air caressing my skin indoors is cool, and the hot carnal air outdoors drains me like a glass of water drained by the sun on the desert sand!

And the other materials.

And the structures!

To entrench the terrain so that it may receive the foundations. To plunge energy therein, like a root. And from this root-foundation the lymph begins to rise. The lymph rises, like young blood. It rises! Vertically, up the wall. And when it is tired of rising skyward, it takes a rest, spreading horizontally, on a line parallel to the crust of the earth. Then it returns to the root. From time to time this lymph feels compelled to overcome this simple law of contraposition, and then its play becomes like magic! It condenses in a strong imposing knot, like the muscled leg of a man; then it suddenly launches itself free into the air, like the savage cry of an eagle; and relaxes, at last, in a light and elegant movement, like a beautiful and beloved woman.

And the color! Color is a thing alive in itself, not represented by any other thing, or imagined. True tangible color, color that is the same on the surface as in the innermost corner, while we may grasp and understand it only in its external visual presence!

Forty-two years. Not much, really, considering the complexity of the job.

But that is not the problem.

My sadness is of another kind.

I could have . . . I could have done so many vital and useful things, even within these forty-two years.

But don't misunderstand me. It is true that I am speaking of myself. But this self, in the present case, reflects also the other architects who really are and feel themselves to be architects and who find themselves, by and large, in the same situation.

There are not many good architects. But some there are. And how sad it is to see men who really could do something being prevented from doing it. Just like seeing a child of dreamlike beauty, paralyzed, ridiculous when he tries to move. Or a loving, fascinating, intelligent woman, who adores children but who, owing to a tiny little error of nature, cannot complete a pregnancy!

But I was supposed to criticize myself. To write my self-criticism. And I notice that this criticism is beginning to extend to all of society. That is what always happens, for that matter.

When there is a lawsuit, no matter where, the lawsuit is against some person. And this person must be condemned, if he is guilty. But at the same time the lawsuit is against all of society, and society is condemned together with the culprit.

What will remain of me, what will stand the judgment of daylight, of all my labor, of my sleepless haunted nights, of all those miles of lines and marks I have traced on paper, of all my struggles against a world of conformism, against a hostile, absent-minded, skeptical, bestial world? What, in short, is going to remain of all that hard work, accomplished day after day, from the time I was eleven years old, when, for the first time, these lines and marks appeared to me to be a marvelous possibility of expression?

Here and there, pieces of my work are dispersed, on some lot of land or other, chosen by chance, without specific or specifiable reason. Fragments they are, even today, of a whole that is yet to come; cadavers, already dissected,



amputated, and, in part, defaced; remains of a civilization that has not yet been born.

My table drawers are bursting with rolls of plans and left-over models of dozens and dozens of works of architecture and town planning that have never been executed. Competitions that I have won with plans that were never carried out. Commissions I received, which then, for one reason or another, came to nothing. A waste of at least ninety percent of my energies.

When I was a boy, I thought I knew what it was to be an architect: someone who designs and builds. Today, after eighteen years of work, of traveling, of becoming acquainted with architects in many countries, my ideas on this subject are both clearer and more confused. So much so that more than once, I must confess, I have felt like giving up the job altogether.

The profession of architect is called a free profession. What do you mean, free? Perhaps that I am free to work twelve hours a day, instead of eight. That, in the best of cases, I am free to get up at nine some days rather than at eight. For all the rest, we are slaves. Slaves of the client, slaves of the authorities, slaves of outside economic pressures, slaves of speculations. Our freedom is like that of a street tumbler or a prostitute.

But again I am breaking out of the limits of self-criticism to enter into self-justification—driven by man's innate passion to cheat.

It is true: there are extenuating circumstances.

But I have to explain the reasons for my architecture. I have to ask myself whether it has started from the premises set forth in this book, whether it has been faithful to these premises; whether it has made, and is making, a contribution to modern architecture; whether, in the last analysis, the buildings I have built, which have stood up in the light of the sun, testify to a new human condition expressed in form.

This is the heart of the problem.

At this point I really should become a bore, a pedant. I

should become my own accountant and draw up the trial balance.

The credit side and the debit side. Then read the balance.

What credit, what debit, what balance! What the hell!

It is so simple to see that what I have done is all without importance, so far is it from that Earth-City, from that Earth-House, that I tried to describe some pages back.

One, two, three, four, even a hundred villas: what do they represent if you fail to place in proper relationships all that belong to the life of man?

What sense is there to a market, a factory, a hotel, no matter what building, sown, as it were, on an urban soil that has nothing whatever to do with our "City"? What sense is there to these isolated experiments severed from a connective tissue that should belong to all but does not exist? What does it mean to design a house for this place, two for that place, three for still another? What meaning is there in building a certain group of houses, after four, five years of sterile struggle and after the original idea may have been warped, after your own mind may have changed and there is no longer any fun in building inasmuch as the building no longer belongs to you? And what does it matter even if, intellectually speaking, some of the principles, some of the aspects of your architecture really fit into the context of your Earth-City, your Earth-House?

Is it enough, perhaps, that when I built this little village in which I live, I tried to create a new space for a new kind of action and a new form to rise from it, one not conceived *a priori*?

Yes, it is true, certain realities are contained in my work.

When I go over to the opposite hill and look at these houses that I have brought to life, I can tell myself: I wanted to destroy style, I wanted houses no longer to be isolated monuments sitting in a row on the earth; I wanted the houses as a group to form one single organism; I wanted them not to be standard but different one from the other because they were born under different conditions, at different moments, with different possibilities; I wanted

to use the materials at my disposal, because one should work within given limits and not create a priori concepts of materials; I wanted the architecture to become landscape and the landscape architecture; I wanted these houses to be capable of growth at any moment that life should demand it, or to remain the way they are, if the conditions of life did not permit their expansion, and for the unity of the composition not to have to suffer either way; I wanted it to be as if the earth had given birth to these houses, not as if the architect had imposed them on the hill by an imperial fiat; I wanted . . . I wanted . . .

Yes, I wanted so many things, and partly I have succeeded—to the extent, at least, that I think that the houses by themselves reveal what I wanted to say.

But can I be satisfied? Can I be satisfied with twenty little houses, when there are square miles on end plastered in a formless, senseless chaos? And when I come back into one of my houses and walk around in it, I can tell myself: I wanted the bedroom not to be a bedroom but a place where I go to sleep; I wanted the dining room not to be a dining room but a place where all of us eat together; that is, I wanted the space in this house to be a free space in which I, together with the others, could find a suitable place for each of our actions; I wanted the roof to be not an umbrella on top of the house, but another place for us to stay in the sunshine or to look at the stars; I wanted the space to be dynamic so that it could vary with the variations of light and season and without our feeling bored and imprisoned; I wanted to be able to live in this house, dressed in overalls and yet feel as dignified as a king; I wanted friends and others to be able to come and feel at home in this house; I wanted to be able to enlarge the house according to needs, without upsetting its form; that is, I wanted the form to be like the form of natural things: always complete, and always capable of change; I wanted going into and out of this house, passing from the outside to the inside and vice versa, to be a natural, fluid process; I wanted, I wanted, I wanted . . .

And, partly, the house satisfies these requirements and achieves them and testifies to them.

But can I be satisfied if ten, a hundred people live this way when hundreds of thousands live in boxes, even if those boxes be gilded and far costlier than my houses?

And then, how much is lacking! To have to build still in the manner of an artisan; to have to use stop-gap materials which fail to answer the mechanical and spiritual requirements of my time; to have still to hide wires and tubes inside the walls, because we have not yet been able to render these functional organs of a house expressive!

And then a lot of other things.

But the most dramatic failure is this: to have to admit that this is an exceptional architecture, because, under present circumstances, I have not been able to demonstrate these same things in a truly collective work of architecture, on a large scale, and comprising all the elements man needs.

And then I think of some other work of mine.

A factory, for example.

And I remember the client. That strange client, who liked my architecture, God knows why, and came to me, and said: "I want a factory from you. But it must not cost more per square yard than any other factory of a simpler and more commercial type; because business is business."

And in this case too I wanted so many things because I was glad to build a factory and to be able to show that the workers could live well inside it. Here too, I wanted and I wanted . . .

And then I think of other works of mine, of different kinds, in different places.

And here too I wanted and I wanted . . .

And I repeat that in every building I built, part of the things I wanted are there to testify to my intentions.

But, after all, I must make the bitter admission that my architecture, though it starts from the premises set forth in this book, though it remains faithful to these premises, though it does constitute a however small contribution to

modern architecture, yet does not reveal a new human condition, expressed through form. The same bitter admission, made with regard to the painter in the chapter on painting, must here be made with regard to the architect who has committed himself to life. Like the painter, the architect finds himself today in an equivocal position, and, no matter how great his talent or the force of his character, he is impotent in face of the reality that surrounds him.

The way things are, architecture can contribute something to human experience: inventions of space, of structure, new materials used in a new way; but it cannot testify to a new way of life, to a new human condition. The figure of the genius-architect, the dictator, inventor, creator of ideas, must die and yield the field to a new type of architect: the service-architect.

I said "service-architect," not "serf," that is, but one who is at the service of others, as anybody should be in any field of occupation.

This is the only position that I think valid, dignified, and noble, because to be at the service of others means not only to be useful to others, it means also to understand them, to love them. Not only that; it means, above all, to understand the unity of all men. And today I do not know one single architect—and I myself am no exception—who finds himself in such a position.

And this, of course, is natural. Because no one can be of service unless society understands the usefulness of his service, and our society is far from such an understanding. This society is an aggregate of single individuals who want to be served, not to serve; it certainly is not, as it should be, one single living organism of which every individual is a member. And splendid as it would be to be at the service of a society, just so horrible is it to be the servant of some one. First of all we need this new kind of consciousness, beyond any a priori definition of life, beyond any attempt to explain life through any of the thousand a priori justifications that have been tried before; a consciousness,

rather, that progresses with the progress of existence, enveloped, like existence itself, in mystery. Only then shall we have a new architecture capable of expressing a new human condition.

Many times, in moments of naïve optimism, I keep dreaming and hoping that I am in this situation. Thousands of times I have hoped to find at least one person (to hope to find a society today is impossible), who would put me into the position of being a service-architect in the above meaning, the position, that is, that would enable me honestly to do my work within the limits of the reality of today, including the economic limits, but freed from all those false, conformist elements that make natural, existential action impossible today for the architect. And I shall keep hoping for such a situation to arise, even if it never does. Other times—many times—in moments of pessimism, I feel like rebelling, I feel like giving up the job of architect altogether, as an act of open revolt and protest against this state of affairs.

How many times have I wishfully imagined myself driven by an inner force toward a feeling of unity with all the others; how many times, again, have I imagined myself alone, flat on my back in the central square of some city, in a gesture of hunger-striking; I have imagined myself in a joint attempt, with others, to abandon forever this life we are forced to lead today and to find a new way of life among ourselves and to create ourselves a new city; at times I have imagined myself an anarchist revolutionary; at other times, simply a vagrant.

Still today I continue my life on this seesaw of states of mind, and I really don't know what my future will be; in a concrete sense, I mean, as a sequence of facts, even though I could say with great certainty that I know everything about my future insofar as it is my own inner reality.

Basically my self-criticism has failed, despite the fact that I practice it, I might say daily, and quite naturally.

If this were a lawsuit, and I were first the culprit, and then the judge, I am almost sure I should condemn myself. Or perhaps I should ask myself, found guilty: "Do you have anything to add before sentence is pronounced?" And I should answer: "Yes, I have some things to add, perhaps the most important ones."

When I started this self-criticism, I did not mean to make a self-criticism of my architecture. That is not up to me, but to others: to the critics, in other words. What I wanted to criticize is my position as an architect. I'll try to make this clearer, through another example.

During the time of Fascism, just before and during the war, my family and I were anti-Fascists, to the point that my brother had to escape to America in 1938; another, younger brother refused military service, my father-in-law was imprisoned and then put into a concentration camp, and I myself eventually lived in the woods, hidden away from the Fascists and Germans. In a certain sense I was proud of myself. But when the war was over, and the first splendid moment of liberation with its promise of a new society began to fade, and fear relaxed—and people again became, I won't say what they were before, but, in the inner recesses of their hearts, certainly not very different—I understood that there was no reason for me to be proud. That is, I understood two things: first, that you can never be sufficiently anti-Fascist; second, that even if, theoretically, a man could be an anti-Fascist *par excellence*, he would still always have a share of co-responsibility for the others who had been Fascists. In other words, I still feel co-responsible for the errors of society. And the same happens with regard to all the actions of men's lives.

Even if I wanted, theoretically, to assume myself to be an architect invulnerable from every point of view, within myself I know that I am co-responsible for all the errors, all the acts of bestial ugliness accomplished by so many other architects. But being far from invulnerable, you can imagine how miserable I feel, how uneasy—in the last analysis, how guilty.

When a member of a family in a primitive society is stricken by some dishonor, the whole family falls into dishonor and has to withdraw into isolation from the others, as if all the members of the family had committed the guilty action. This is a naïve but at the same time noble tradition, imposed by certain customs. Now if we think of all mankind as of one family, you will understand that if a sin is committed by one man, all men should share the responsibility and feel guilty. If we think of all the architects as of one family, you will understand that when an architect does something immoral, all the architects should feel guilty of immorality.

And if by architect I mean that Anonymous Architect (20th Century), with the qualities that should result clearly from a reading of this book, and if I then compare myself to him, then my guilt becomes so obvious that you can touch it with your finger: because I do not have these qualities, even if I wish and seek to have them; and the situation in which I find myself does not correspond to his.

The fact that this is, naturally, the fault of circumstances beyond the force of my will, does not change the problem.

It remains that I am not an Anonymous Architect (20th Century), that, consequently, I am a failure and all that is left to me is to try to attest to my position, as it were, in a testamentary way—which is what I shall try to do in the concluding chapter of this book.



## A Testament

Some morning, on a day of splendid sunshine, here on this hill, with the low fog hiding the city at my feet, lucid in my mind and surrounded by the persons I have loved most dearly, I want to die.

With no fear of death. With my wife and children around me, gently, gently, without tears on any face, or the tears only of a sweet goodbye. And without physical suffering, without the martyrdom of torn flesh that prevents thinking clearly.

To say goodbye. To say goodbye to everything and to everybody.

To great things and small.

To say goodbye to the earth that receives you back.

To say goodbye to the sun.

To say goodbye to the trees, to the stones, to the grass.

To say goodbye to the air which now enters your laboring lungs.

To the water your parched lips are craving.

To say goodbye to people, knowing nothing of tomorrow. But knowing that the sun will still be there, that the air, water, trees, stones, and grass will still be there.

And, above all, that there will still be people in this world who love one another and who will see and live all that you have seen and lived.

It is true that you die, and that everything dies for you, but it does not die with you.

For this is the real meaning of "testament."

This is what it means: to link your life, that is coming to an end, to the lives of the others who remain.

Death means conclusion.

Testament means a sense of the continuity of life.

To finish this book is somewhat the same thing.

Because there are deaths within death. And there are deaths within life. Just as there are lives within life, and lives within death.

Perhaps anybody who finishes writing a book goes through this same experience. This is certainly how I am feeling. Especially since I am not a writer. When I began this book, I wrote an introduction. I wanted to make it clear that this book should not have been necessary. It became necessary because of the impossibility for me to express myself through my normal means, those of the architect and the painter.

Because I did not feel at ease in this world.

Because I had to build stone walls where they were not true, and I had to put colors where they were not true.

The city has failed me, society has failed me, the "others" and the needs of the others have failed me.

And thus, after all, my whole life has been a testament.

Or at least I have lived it the way you make a testament. But others will come, and so will society, and the City.

How, where, and who knows when—it does not matter.

What matters is to die conscious of the fact that life goes on.

I am stretched out on these rocks in the mild light and warmth of an October sun. My wife is typing some pages of this book. The children are at school; my assistants and collaborators are at work on my projects; and I am thinking of the people I love, and of all the people on this earth. I hear the hammering of the masons and the humming of some late insect. If I really had to die here and now, I would die happy. This loneliness of my existence, this wear and tear of a relentless struggle to push the world a little forward, this stepping on the gas pedal of your

body-motor, accelerating it to the mad speed of the new dimensions man has found today—all this would be eased by this marvelous feeling that all men are headed for new shores, perhaps other planets, other human conditions: toward the evolution, perhaps, of other organisms, an evolution in which mankind is but a link in a chain. The fish became a bird. From water to air. But how much time and how much effort went into that! Our ancestors crawled with their faces toward the earth. Now we walk upright. Who knows what is going to happen next?

Evolution may have in store a man who is no longer just man, but one finally become human, after all these millions of years.

A free man, and freed. Freed and free from all taboos and all myths. Physics and metaphysics reconciled, and become one single thing. Life and death, without a break of continuity. Man who, at last, has found his natural dimension: the dimension for which he was born!

The earth with man. The earth and man. The earth impossible without man.

Man the master of himself. And no longer alone.

Man who has expanded his being to reach the exact limits of his own body. Man who has achieved an osmosis, who circulates freely in space, at his ease on earth and in the cosmos. And all this, beyond wish or evasion, beyond poetry. Only within nature, within his natural human condition.

What will this man be called? This man whom men until today have represented in various forms of individual or collective exaltation, as hero, as Messiah, as the Adam of Paradise Lost, or even as the Angel?

How beautiful it is to die. How sweet it is to die and at last to know man reconciled to himself, reconciled to his own existence, no longer a stranger and lonely and shy and full of fear of this world which is not yet his own.

To know that he is at last living his life at ease on this earth, ready for total osmosis; ready to live even beyond the limits of this earth.

At ease with his flesh.

At ease with his thoughts.

At ease with the little matters of daily life.

At ease with the human adventure on this earth!

But now I must conclude.

I must finish this book in the simplest way, in the most banal, elementary way possible.

A few days ago, when I began this conclusion, the day was sunny and the rocks were warm, and dying seemed to me a sweet, gentle thing. Today, instead, it is cold, the sun is covered by clouds, and the sky is all rain. Today the dimension of the human sky is no more than 900 feet high. And this narrow space, too, is streaked with the cold drops that furrow your face, the hollow of your chest, like swords, as you are nailed there to this deathbed. Well may you think of the space above, and realize that only a few yards higher up a splendid sun is shining on marvelous white clouds that here and now seem to you dark and sad.

Today I imagine myself dying alone, alone like a dog, despised and abandoned by all, with pains in this flesh that is tired of living: pains that make you go out of your mind, pains that only death could ease. To die like a human derelict that has missed all his real life; to die, perhaps, in one of those intolerable asylums for the old where false professional charity may offend even the most elementary and insensible person. And, considering life the way it is today, this is what may easily happen tomorrow. And while you may be thus shut up and enveloped in your suffering like a cocoon, unable to see beyond your personal suffering, the end of life could indeed be tragic, pessimistic: man is evil; life is evil; and evil it shall always be.

"To hell with life!" and die.

That too could happen.

There are, in fact, so many deaths, and so many ways of dying. So it is better to be prudent. What I should wish,

however, is to die gently, full of hope, lucid, anonymous, aware of life continuing in the others; knowing that everything has its reason, and believing in the future, even though this future will no longer be mine, at least not within the temporal and spatial dimensions of mankind; believing in a collective existence in an expanding world; convinced that my own life, for good or for evil as I apparently may have lived it, has been useful for myself and for the others, as the lives of all men on earth have always been since the beginning of time.

There, the sun has come out again. All of a sudden. And the light turns my eyes into two balls of fire, and my body into a warm thing that lives on the earth!

What then shall be my conclusion?

More or less, well or badly, I have said what I had to say.

I could have said it differently, in a more synthesized and, perhaps, more concentrated form, or I could have been more analytical, more precise, and that much more lengthy; I could have expressed myself more poetically or in a more elementary fashion. But I have written this book the way I could, within the limits of time that external contingencies have not certainly imposed but suggested, and which I have accepted; I have written bit by bit, during the shreds of time left free by my pressing daily obligations. I have written as best I could, without pretensions. In a language that may have its place somewhere between the spoken and the inner language, not a school or court language, but more intimate and more genuine.

If it turned out all right, this should be a book that just about everybody should have been able to write. Of course it would have been different. Just as people are different. But the problems to solve, the things to analyze, would have been substantially the same. A producer of house slippers could have said the same things talking of his slipper-making business. He would have compared well-made shoes with badly made and dishonest shoes, whereas

I have talked more about architecture and painting because these are my job.

If the book has succeeded well, anybody who reads it could add on chapters and continue the book. Continue it in his own way. Because that is what my book wants to be. A book open to all, which everybody could continue to write.

The only thing that is important is to understand the situation of man and to work within this situation.

The situation today is that man finds himself in a state of transformation, of transition. This is why things are so confused and not well under control. And man suffers, feels bad, and seems to be faced with a futureless future. This book is an effort to demonstrate that this future exists and that, in a synthesis, it can be symbolized by Anonymous (20th Century). And this man will come. If he is not of the 20th century, he will be of the 21st. That does not matter. Nor does it matter whether you or I individually have been licked. It is obvious by now anyway that either we save ourselves together, all of us, or no one can save himself. This awareness has finally been born. It has been sown in the earth. And the earth is nourishing this seed and will bring it forth. This is logical, fatal, inevitable.

The earth will bring it forth. But there will be no miraculous birth. The earth will not bring forth any new Messiah, though he may have been prophesied for centuries and awaited for centuries and his coming be signaled by the heavenly bodies. This time the earth will give birth little by little, day by day. And nobody, or only a few, will pay any attention to these partial births. The earth will bring forth anonymous men, aware of themselves.

Tomorrow the shoemaker . . .

Tomorrow the physician . . .

Tomorrow the mailman . . .

Tomorrow the architect . . .

Tomorrow . . .

Tomorrow, at last, the earth will bring forth men able to live together harmoniously.

I had intended, at this point, to try to conclude *en beauté*. That is, I wanted to describe the life of a community in its daily existence.

I wanted to tell about it as though it had been an experience lived through rather than wished for, the existence of these people, Anonymous (20th Century), who at last will be able to live in peace, no longer alone but together, no longer desperate but full of hope, able to live their day within the day, but a day that had its yesterday and will have its tomorrow; able together to bring about on this earth, quite naturally, those things that in times past only visionaries could imagine, or poets, and that many had postponed until after death.

In my imagination I have found myself so often near these people who are yet to come, that I could describe, like a reporter of the history of the future, those most simple and natural acts of their existence.

But my book is an open book, without end, hence without conclusion. And hence it will be life itself that will describe day after day the things that are going to happen.

The thing that matters today—in this period of transition and rapid transformation of man, in this period of crisis in the sense I gave the word in the introduction to this book—the thing that matters today is to be aware of the fact that the world is not moving toward self-destruction, but that men, in spite of all revolutions, wars, cataclysms, and natural catastrophes, are headed towards a new reality, that the gates of the future, as one says rhetorically, are open, and beyond those gates, there is a long road to travel, that our children will take that road, that we all are already on the way after all.

There is the sun, and it is warming me.

I woke up this morning, I woke up anonymous, rising from the night and from sleep. This morning I did not read the papers. This morning I climbed to the roof of my house, and I stretched my arm forward and heavenward. Then this hand, as though it were of a dying man, unable

to speak by now, waved a sign of goodbye, gentle and human.

But it was not a farewell to mankind. It was only a shy and gentle gesture of greeting to the other human beings on this earth, as though I wanted to wish a good day to all, a good day to my own limbs, since the others are part of me, and I part of them.







*(continued from front flap)*

ing without being condemned. . . . A child born in this house is going to be deprived of vital experiences: he will not see grass or butterflies, not even the sun and the moon; but I'll get away with it."

Ricci aligns himself with what he optimistically, and even joyously, conceives to be the wave of the future, the age of one world and of world cities, in which men will live their lives not as alienated anxiety-ridden individuals existing in a make-do environment but as free men, the inheritors of the treasures of all the ages before them, in an environment consciously created for the maximum common good of all. These are the "Anonymous (20th Century)" men with whom he identifies himself, men who will create the "anonymous earth" of the future, not as "masters" or "geniuses" but simply as human beings, members of the human race. "The anonymous earth that belongs to all, that belongs to men who are reconciled, reconciled to themselves, to other men, to things, reconciled to their earth."

Does all this seem far out, a noble but impossible dream? Not as Ricci writes of it, in terms as intimate as his relations with his wife, his children, and his students, as general as city-planning. Whether he is writing of a medieval cathedral or that of Gaudí, of Cimabue or of Picasso, he manages to hit the nail on the head with quite realistic precision. He is that rarest of men, the visionary with a hard core of common sense, who understands the relationship between the rhythm of his own heart and the heart of mankind. His book is a testament to one man's life and an inspiration to all.

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